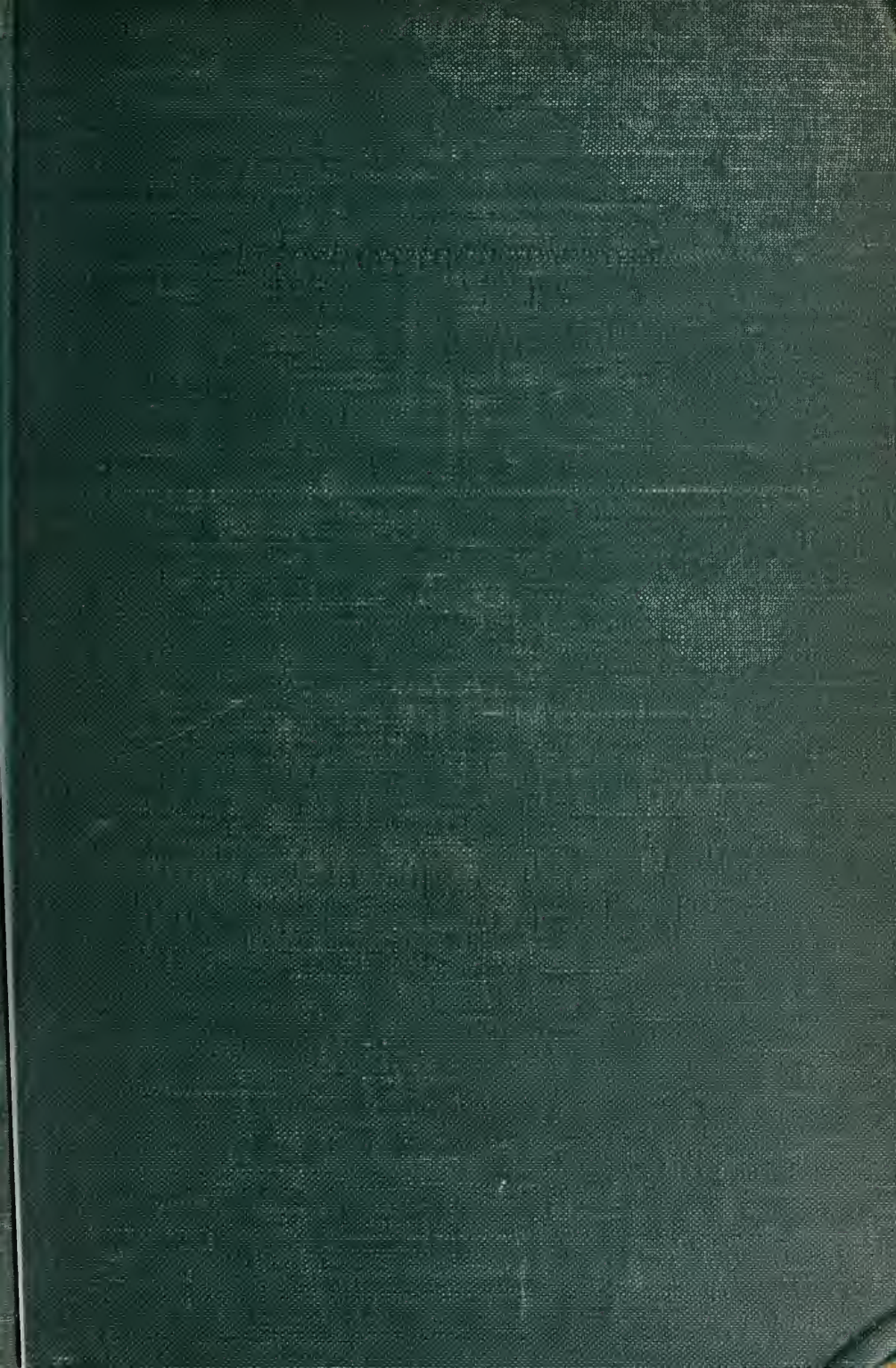






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LIFE, LETTERS,
AND LITERARY REMAINS

OF

J. H. SHORTHOUSE

EDITED BY HIS WIFE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

LITERARY REMAINS





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Emery Walker Photo

Henry Thoreau

aged 53.

LITERARY REMAINS
OF
J. H. SHORTHOUSE

EDITED BY HIS WIFE

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PREFATORY NOTE

WITH the exception of "The Midsummer Night's Dream" and "A Sunday Afternoon," the whole of the Early Essays and Stories contained in this volume were read from time to time at the social meetings of the Friends' Essay Society of Birmingham. At these meetings essays upon very various subjects were read aloud, and afterwards sent round to each member for perusal. In time these were collected and bound in volumes. It is from these manuscript volumes that Mr. Shorthouse's early writings have been selected, in response to requests from readers of his published works. Speaking broadly, they were contributed to the Essay Meeting in the course of twenty years. The shorter ones would be written when the author was eighteen or twenty years of age; those more strictly literary and philosophical between the ages of twenty and forty. Mr. Shorthouse ceased to be a member of the

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Essay Society soon after he began to concentrate his efforts upon *John Inglesant*.

In order to make the volume representative also of his later work, Mr. Shorthouse's contributions to various periodicals, and also his Essay on the Platonism of Wordsworth, read before the Wordsworth Society, have been included.

S. SHORTHOUSE.

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PLATE

J. HENRY SHORTHOUSE, <i>from a Photograph by</i> <i>R. W. Thrupp.</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
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EARLY ESSAYS

1854-1874

MY FEVER

I HAVE been all my life what Nathaniel Hawthorne calls "a devoted epicure of my own emotions," and this in a manner which I have never heard any one else express as their own experience. Nothing is more common than to hear of a man having no other companion than his own thoughts, and in this way people talk of creating a world within themselves, and fancy they have made a very grand creation. Now I have no wish to impugn the beauty of their peculiar worlds, but I wish to express a difference between such people's dreaming and my own, which is this, that, as in their case they themselves remain the chief and ruler as it were over their so created kingdoms, marshalling their thoughts and bringing them up as in battalia to fight on any particular side, in my case, on the contrary, you subside, and lose all personal identity, every one of your thoughts acting for itself without any exertion of your will to call it into being, or being so to act—yet are you not so dead asleep but that the knowledge of your own existence is still present with you between dream and reality, and a power to observe or contemplate lazily these thoughts, which can no longer be called yours, together

with any half-seen, half-understood objects of the material world that may chance to mingle with them. This power of half-observation is all that is left, both of and to you, all the rest having become separated, and attained an identity and a personality of its own, and a mixture with the outer world. Of course this—this—whatever you choose to call it, for I cannot think of a word to express the peculiar state I have endeavoured to describe—takes place mostly when the body is at rest, and more especially at seasons of ill-health or sickness, when the powers of the body are prostrated and those of the mind proportionably increased, and the instance of which, with your leave, I will venture to attempt a description, occurred at one of these times of sickness.

I was travelling with a party of young men, and being all reckless and wild from school, we committed a thousand imprudences, which in my case, never being of a very strong constitution, brought on a violent cold, which in a few days ended in something worse, in the midst of which I separated from my companions, and set out on horseback to ride some sixty or eighty miles, to a friend's house, with whom I was to spend a few weeks. When I left a town about halfway from my place of destination, I began to feel very ill, but persevered in hopes of reaching my friend's house, where I was sure of being well cared for, and in this hope I set out about the middle of the day. I shall never forget that ride—the weary, weary length it was; the many attempts I made to shorten it by increasing my horse's speed, which always ended in sinking back listlessly again

into a walk; the desperate efforts I made to waken myself from the increasing insensibility that was creeping over me; the strange things my disordered vision saw upon the road; the horrid feeling that everything was fading away from me; and finally, all the trees and the road and the stones seemed to rush fiercely upon me, and I lost all consciousness and knew no more where I was. When I came to myself, or rather, when I regained that one power of half-observation of which I spoke above, I found myself in bed—in a large, high-canopied, antique bed, with gold stars on the top of the canopy, and a large sun with great rays in the midst. The room in which I was, was large, and furnished in the manner of a bygone age, with dark tapestries on the walls and dark oaken chairs and large cabinets; there was a large bay window on the right-hand side near the bed, through which I could see over the leafy tops of apple trees into shady but sunny fields beyond.

All this I saw without hardly opening my eyes, and with a languid feeling of curiosity not strong enough to cause me to make the least effort to gratify it. It seemed to me—and it is impossible to describe the force with which this seeming comes when your thoughts act entirely independently of any will of your own—it seemed to me as if I was living then in the only possible way any one *could* live, and that all that I remembered of my past life seemed to me as faint histories of what occurred a thousand years ago seem to us. All that I ever read of past ages seemed to come before me languidly, and I seemed to wander and

die and suffer misery with dead men of the old time at the very moment that I was conscious of the exquisite luxury of the soft bed, and of my own weak, listless, dreamy state ; for through all this the principal feature is the absolute inaction and inanity in which you are, and it is impossible to describe the strange confusion with which you see before you the actions of past ages, mixed up with what used to be your own thoughts, together with the half-seen objects of the material world which are moving around you, and which become as it were strange personages acting in the old, remembered tale.

The afternoon sun streamed in through the small panes, and illumined with its dusty and softened rays the dim obscurity of the farther end of the room, and shone full on the portrait of a gentleman in the costume of a century and a half ago. Underneath was a legend showing it to be the portrait of a certain Lord Edward Darrell, who was drowned in the year 1702 in crossing a ford not far from this house, together with two verses, seemingly a portion of some ballad, and which ran thus :

Lord Edward has ridden o'er Lanton Chase
And down to the banks of Dee ;
He has ridden hard through the summer heat,
From his weary thoughts to flee.

O'er Lanton Chase, and down to the Dee
They have seen Lord Edward ride ;
He entered the ford all fearlessly,—
But he never came up on the other side.

And as I read these words, the chamber and the bed vanished from me, and I was walking in a

beautiful flat meadow all strewn with buttercups and daisies, by the side of a fair, smooth river, with willows on the banks and water-lilies covering great part of its surface ; and I found the body of the drowned Lord Darrell lying close to the bank, with the lilies intertwined over him ; and I hoped he would so remain for ever, for I thought he was well buried there in a right beautiful grave, with his own body for the effigy, and the lilies for the carving, and the wreaths upon his tomb. And as I stood there, a very beautiful lady came to me and told me I must be quiet and not speak, which I thought was very strange ; and she sat down in the meadow among the bright yellow buttercups, and told me how Lord Darrell was betrothed to his cousin, a lady who lived at this house, Lady-Croft Hall ; and how he was a very wild, dissipated young man ; and how he did not love her, in spite of her beauty, which was very great ; and how he rode down from London one beautiful April afternoon, after heavy rains ; and how he was drowned in the ford ; and when she said that, I thought it was well he had died then. And I prayed that when it should arrive that by my wrong-doing I was going to give pain to any one that loved me, I might die too, and, harmless to myself and to all others, lie down and be at rest. Then I asked the lady, wondering, why she had said "this house," when we were in the field, and could only just see the roofs and chimneys of the Hall over the willow trees ; and she shook her head and said I was not in the fields, but in bed, whither I had been brought when found senseless in the road, near the gateway of the

house ; and then I saw she was right, and I was lying in the old bed again ; but I could not see the lady any more, though the door at the other end of the room opened, and another lady came in, dressed in white in an old fashion, with beautiful golden hair wreathed with strings of violets. She did not take any notice of me, but came and sat down by the open window and looked fixedly out over the apple trees and fields to where she could see the London road stretching before her. I lay a long time looking at her dreamily—she sat with one arm leaning on the window-sill, and the afternoon sun shining on her—as a man looks at a beautiful picture which he is quite certain will not fade away. And I thought how pitiful was the ingratitude of men, who have set before them beautiful gifts that a god might envy, and who throw them lightly away. We are waited for, for hours, by bright angels, and we come not, or if we come, repay with a short, cold word the anxiety of a life. And there was no sound heard but the humming of the insects through the open windows, and everything was so very still and calm that I thought nothing would ever disturb the tranquillity of that scene, and that I had come upon a blessed country where all things always were the same.

Suddenly, in the midst of this sweet calm, the lady started up with a wild cry—"A horse, a horse!" and there was a great noise as of galloping, and the running to and fro of servants and of people being sent out to seek ; and then the body of Lord Darrell, which I had seen in the river, was brought in and laid in the very bed in which

I lay. And I struggled against the horror of that wet, loathsome thing, but could not shake it off, and its cold, flabby hand fell upon my face, and I fainted away. And then I heard as if everything everywhere was preaching this one sermon—that when we think we stand, then certainly we fall ; that when that house was at its stillest and calmest, and when I thought no evil could possibly befall it, then the darkest cloud hung over it and the deepest blow was struck ; and when that lady thought her happiness at the full, then it was dashed rudely to the ground ; and that when I lay fixedly in the most perfect state of bodily pleasure and dreamy happiness, then was I nearest to that dead body—which at that very moment was coming up the stairs to lie down upon me in all its ghastly horror and deathliness.

And now but one word more. I am now perfectly recovered, and am to-morrow to be married to the beautiful lady I met walking in the meadow with the buttercups ; and our love, though begun in a dream, will, I fervently trust, be continued through the stern realities of a life.

TWENTY MILES

IN *Household Words*, vol. x., for September 2, 1854, was a paper with this heading, so well written, that as I have had some little experience in the same way myself, I cannot do better than follow so good an example and give you the benefit of some of this experience of mine.

The twenty miles of the writer in *Household Words* was, as the readers of the periodical (the best extant) are aware, from Lancaster to Preston; and in this he has an advantage over me, seeing that his walk was twenty miles straight on, whereas mine is ten miles there and ten back, namely, from this good town of Birmingham to the town of Coleshill; and this again must be shortened, for, if we except William Hutton's house, there is nothing noticeable before we come to Castle Bromwich, with its fine old hall and pretty rural village, with creepers over almost all the houses. Just beyond Castle Bromwich is a very fine rookery with the usual amount of noise.

Up to this time the weather on the day of my walk had been very dull, but here the sun burst out splendidly, making the leafless trees and hedges look bright and warm. "Welcome, Phoebus Apollo, Lord of Day, or whatever name

thou choosest to be called by,—thrice welcome here.”

On the brow of the hill, beyond Castle Bromwich, you get the first glimpse of Coleshill spire about three miles before you, and a beautiful view it is. Just before me, about a mile off, was a dark brown leafless wood, out of which the tower and spire seemed to rise at once into the clear sky; on each side lay the far distance, bright in the sunshine, and every few minutes the tower and spire were gilded into brightness, and then sank back into dark shadow; in the foreground were fields and homesteads and the broad, white, winding road, with the lights and shadows chasing each other over the scene. I wish those who think there can be no beauty when the leaves are off the trees, except in frost, had been with me that day.

And now, in imitation of the shadows from the fleeting clouds playing before me, I have a shadow of a human nature. In the reign of Henry VII., when Perkin Warbeck was in arms in the south for the throne of England, Sir Simon Montfort, Lord of Coleshill, sent thirty pounds to him by his younger son Henry, honestly supposing him to be the son of his former master, Edward IV. On this very road the young man travelled, and on this very spot, possibly, turned his horse for a last look at his home. The tower stood then nearly as it does now, and the prospect was much the same, with more wood. Well would it have been for him if he had been warned there in time, and turned his horse and ridden back. All this fair manor of Coleshill, with its bright fields and

smiling homesteads and stately woods, that lay so calm and fair before him—all this, together with his father's life, was lost for that thirty pounds. When that unfortunate gentleman was brought to his trial at Guildhall, he was accused of nothing else; but this he never denied. It was proved that he had no particular intention of favouring Warbeck, but merely sent the money good-naturedly and in a gallant recollection of the duty he owed formerly to his dead master, King Edward; yet in his old age he was drawn through the city and hanged and quartered at Tyburn. His manor was given to his accuser, Simon Digby, in whose family it still remains.

A little farther on is a road to Coleshill over the meadows, and through a large field like a chase, once a part of the park of the Digbys, dotted all over with very old oaks, some of them quite bleached and dead, part of the old Forest of Arden. Near the path are two very old trees where originally stood four, which bore the name of the "Four Evangelists." One of them has a hollow in the trunk large enough to shelter three or four men. Far on is a little foot-bridge over the Cole, a pretty stream with willows on the banks.

Flow on, blithe rivulet, to the sea,
Thy tribute waves deliver.

In these meadows you get many pleasant views of Coleshill on the top of its hill, with the old houses and gable ends and great barns and farm buildings grouped close round the foot of its lofty tower and spire. I believe there are one or two modern abominations with slated roofs, but you

can't see them from here. A little farther, and you are at the town.

In the large, fine old church are the tombs of the Digbys, each with their effigies and those of their ladies, beautifully carved in alabaster, their hands folded; the lords with their swords by their sides, their heads resting upon helmets, and their feet on lions. And older than these are two effigies of the Clintons, with fleur-de-lis on their shields, and legs crossed, Crusaders to the Holy Land! The pews are close against these two last, and I thought how different a seat there must have been, with that old Crusader beside you, from two hours in the Meeting-house in Bull Street. One of the Prayer-books I opened was marked "Charlotte Hollis." I wonder whether Charlotte ever thinks of what that means by her side? Let us hope she is always better employed.

I made a speech on the subject of their being buried cross-legged which greatly delighted the old sexton, and in the hope that it may do the same to you, I will give it as near as I can entire. "And you see they are buried cross-legged, which means that they fought in the Holy Land against the Turks. For you see the Turks had got Jerusalem, and Christians wanted to get it, and so there were many great wars between them, and whoever fought in the Holy Land was buried with his legs crossed when he died."

This exposition so delighted the old man that, overcome with his emotions, he burst forth into the passionate exclamation: "Sir, you are a learned gentleman; I daresay you'll have read a

great deal about the old times." Modesty, of course, forbids my informing the Essay Meeting, as I did the old sexton, that I had read something. I am aware that Pennant thinks the Clintons buried here were not Crusaders, and that sometimes men were buried cross-legged merely as a sign of reverence and faith; but I confess that I hardly like to believe this. By the bye, the old sexton is worth studying; I was told so before I went, and I found it to be true. He is eighty-six years old, and very hale and hearty; he was born near Lichfield, and remembers the organ in Coleshill Church when it was at Lisherwick, the seat of the late Lord Donegal, near that place. When the house was pulled down in 1810 it was brought here. He (the sexton) was thirty-six years waiter at the Swan at Coleshill, and, as he told me, remembered as many as fifteen or sixteen carriages waiting at once at the gate for horses! What a picture this gives us of the old posting days! It was a great place in that way, as the direct road to Liverpool passed through it, missing Birmingham, which place the great people did not like even to change horses in. He has been nearly thirty years in his present post; he disapproves of railways, and says that, although he has friends in Birmingham, he is afraid to go there, it is so large. At the entrance of the church is a curious font, quaintly carved.

And so I tore myself away from the old sexton and the church. The churchyard stands high, and, as Pennant remarks, commands a fine view of a rich country. And then, turning towards home

in the warm afternoon sunshine, I lingered in the meadow by the banks of the Cole and in the chase among the ancient remains of the once proud Forest of Arden, my thoughts full of the old Digbys lying peacefully beneath their effigied tombs in Coleshill Church.

BOOKS *VERSUS* BOOKS

CARDINAL DE RETZ, that most turbulent of statesmen, according to Madame de Sévigné, became the sweetest of retired señors, and did nothing but read books and feed his trout. The greatest men in all time, persons even in the shock of that greatest of all businesses, the business of the World—Lorenzo de Medici, for instance—have combined with their other energies the greatest love of books, and found no recreation at once so wholesome and so useful. Warren Hastings also, who had ruled India, yearned for the scenes of his boyhood, and lived to be happy in them. When Shenstone was a child he used to have a new book brought home from the next market town whenever anybody went to market. If he had gone to bed and was asleep, it was put under his pillow, and if it had been forgotten and he was awake, “then his mother wrapped up a piece of wood of the same form and pacified him for the night.” All good and great men in all ages have been fond of books. Yes! say what you will, books open for us a world more bright, more glorious, more magnificent than our own; books store our memory with glorious pictures of all ages, and create in us a new world; and their

true believer sees, feels, acts, lives, within himself. The past is open to him; he lives again with great men who passed away long, long ago. He is, says Leigh Hunt, again in communion with the past, again interested in its adventures, grieving with its griefs, laughing with its merriment—forgetting the very chair and room he is sitting in. Who, in the mysterious operation of things, shall dare to assert in what unreal corner of time and space that man's mind is; or what better proof he has of the existence of the poor goods and chattels about him which at that moment are (to him) non-existent? "Oh," people say, "but he wakes up and sees them there!" Well, he woke *down* "to them and saw the rest." What we distinguish into dreams and realities are, in both cases, but representations of impressions. So says Leigh Hunt, and who, I ask, will deny it? I once read a story of a German who lived only in his dreams; he dreamt on continuously from night to night, and went nowhere in the day. He dreamt he was prince of a fairy island in a far-off sea; he was married to a beautiful princess with whom he lived (in his dreams) for years. At last she died. He hoped there was no such thing as death in dreams, but he never saw her again; but then he, too, pined; then he, too, died—is not this strong proof? Indeed I may almost say with Leigh Hunt, that I more frequently wake out of common life to them or to thoughts caused in them, than out of them to common life. Call me dreamer, visionary, what you will, I would not change for a world! What is to me the Emperor of the French, or

what are all the heroes of to-day compared with the heroes of poetry, of history, or romance—and yet I can enjoy this world perhaps as well as most. Which is more exciting, the spectacle of the funeral of the Duke of Wellington, or this :

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
 Burnt on the water ; the poop was beaten gold ;
 Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
 The winds were love-sick ; with them, the oars were silver .
 Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
 The water, which they beat, to follow faster,
 As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
 It beggar'd all description ; she did lie
 In her pavilion (cloth of gold of tissue)
 O'er-picturing that Venus, where we see
 The fancy outwork Nature : on each side her
 Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
 With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem
 To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool, and what
 They undid, did.

O rare for Antony !

From the barge
 A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
 Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
 Her people out upon her ; and Antony,
 Enthroned in the market-place, did sit alone
 Whistling to the air ; which, but for vacancy,
 Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
 And made a gap in Nature.

Rare Egyptian !

Can you not see her, dreamer, where she comes ?
 People nowadays have no faith. They can't
 believe what science tells them is not true. If I
 were to read to them (these unbelievers, I mean)
 the exquisite travels of William W. de Rubenquis
 or Marco Polo they would laugh scornfully, and
 stick themselves up upon the top of the pinnacle

of Science, and say, "See what progress I have made! It surprises me how people could be in such a state of ignorance!" "What deplorable darkness!—how can you read such stuff?" etc. etc. etc. I beg leave to assure their mightinesses that it was by these despised first steps that they reached their marvellous wisdom, and humbly to suggest that if they had a little more respect for their forefathers, it would by no means lessen their own greatness, or sit ill upon them. Many of these despised ignoramuses were greater men than we shall ever be; surely they cannot be blamed for their childlike and simple trust; what does the Bible say about little children—read that and ponder, thou worshipper of Science! Is not this exquisite? Marco Polo, speaking of a desert in Tartary, says, "In it there are not either beasts or birds; they say that there dwelt many spirits in this wilderness, which caused great and marvellous illusions to travellers and made them perish; for if any stay behind and cannot see his company, he shall be called by his name, and so, going out of the way, is lost. In the night they hear, as it were, the noise of a company, which taking to be theirs, they perish likewise. Also a great unendurable face that uses to stare at people as they went by. Concerts of music-instruments are sometimes heard in the air, likewise drums and noise of armies. They go therefore close together, hang bells on their beasts' necks, and set marks if any stray." Oh, what a deal you wise people lose! But you must be a universalist in literature to be a true reader; you must not, as too many do, read only such books as are repre-

sentatives of some opinion or passion of your own. "The universalist," says Leigh Hunt, "is the only reader who can make something out of books for which he has no predilection." I believe you will always find something to repay your trouble in every book that has ever been written. In some of the ponderous black-letter volumes of theology, for instance, you stumble upon most beautiful thoughts—in Archbishop Leighton, I think, there is the following: "Archimedes was not singular in his fate, the most part of mankind die unexpectedly first poring over the figures they have traced upon the sand." Even if you are shut up in a country-inn parlour on a wet day with an old almanac or an odd volume of old magazines, I entreat you not to despair. I pledge myself, you shall find something to interest you, or it is your own fault.

Charles Lamb was not quite a universalist; he says he could read any book with these exceptions—court-calendars, directories, pocket-books, draught-boards bound and lettered on the back, scientific treatises, almanacs, statutes at large, the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and generally all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without,"—these he says are books which are no books.

Most people, says the preface of a little series called "Readable Books," have their own opinion of what constitutes a readable book. The late Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Charles Wood, gave the palm to Thucydides—an opinion with which many an old University Fellow would

doubtless coincide. Dr. Dry-as-Dust, F.S.A., would prefer a black-letter volume ; an unfledged student of the law, *Punch* or the *Gent* ; while a more mature Mr. Briefless, possibly, Blackstone or Chitty. Lady Theresa Angelus would select a volume of the Rev. Mr. Oriel's sermons or Dr. Dove's tracts ; Mr. Cobden a daily newspaper ; and Major Rawlinson a stamped brick from Nineveh. Some worthy men would be all for popular science, and others for progress essays ; while we question if a commercial traveller would hear of anything but the time-tables of Bradshaw. What a deal these people lose !

CHIVALRY¹

ALTHOUGH I was fully prepared to encounter any amount of opposition to my justification of Claverhouse, still I must confess to a little astonishment at the dead set which has been made against the essay in praise of Chivalry, and although I do not intend to say a word more on the subject of Viscount Dundee, I will venture to intrude upon the very valuable time of the Essay Meeting with a few observations on the two papers which have set themselves so unmercifully to pull that essay to pieces.

In one of these essays the author makes a distinction which I do not understand, namely, that one of the greatest evils of Chivalry was the making its votaries esteem honour before duty. I firmly believe that it is in keeping our honour spotless that we best perform our duty, both to ourselves and others—of course I mean honour in its purest and highest sense. Our chief business in this world is with ourselves: "Keep yourselves unspotted from the world." This I know is not at this time a fashionable doctrine—so long as they accomplish good, people seem not to care what means they take to gain their

¹ The last of three essays on the subject. The two earlier seemed less worthy of preservation.—ED.

ends. Louis Kossuth is an instance of this. They say that when they hunt the ermines, they strew a quantity of dirt round its dwelling-place, and then drive the ermine towards it, when the creature suffers itself to be taken, rather than defile the spotless purity of its whiteness, which it values more than life. An exquisitely beautiful lesson for us, if we would learn by it. That is a splendid passage in Chateaubriand's autobiography in which, speaking of the emigrants, he says: "At the present day the outcry against the emigrants is, they were tigers, who lacerated the bosom of their mother; at the period of which I speak, people were guided by old notions, *and honour was reckoned for something, as well as country.*" With regard to the other part of the accusation, that Chivalry set the authority of a temporal head above that of God, I simply say that I do not believe it. If it were so, how came it that men gave up all that they had—friends, possessions, lands—to throng in thousands to the Crusades, and this, not at the command of any temporal head or chief, but at the preaching of God's supposed Vicar and Vicegerent? And was not their war-cry always, "It is the will of God! it is the will of God!" It is very easy to say that it was interested motives, or a vile superstition, that prompted them to that; but why should we always ascribe the worst motives we can select for the actions of our fellow-men? Now suppose that at some future time people may say that the advocates of peace at the present day were so only because they thought two millions infinitely better deposited in their own

pockets than expended in a ruinous war. There are innumerable things of this kind people may say, and what should we think of it? All I want to do is to pay the same respect to the motives of our fathers that we would have posterity pay to ours—a golden rule, which always has been golden, and always will be, even in this our iron age.

And here I may as well observe that I did not (in a former essay) say that the Feudal System or Chivalry extinguished serfdom in England, but that facts did not seem to justify the accounts we hear of the great cruelties practised by the Normans; I think there is some difference between this and what I have been accused of saying. I might have said that I believe the Feudal System, as introduced by the Normans, was less opposed to a spirit of freedom among the lower orders than the government of the Saxons, and I believe I should be borne out by the facts in this assertion. With regard to the state of learning among the Saxons, they might, and undoubtedly did, do all the great works described, and yet, at the time of the Conquest, have sunk into the state William of Malmesbury declares they had, and I hope my fair antagonist will pardon me if I say that I see no sufficient reason for doubting his word, though of course the authors of the present time must be infinitely better acquainted with the events of the Dark Ages than the poor benighted people who lived in them. And here I must again allude to what I find myself continually repeating, that the Normans who landed on the coast of Neustria were not the Normans who conquered England—

they were a totally changed people. When they landed, they were mere barbarians ; they retained their courage, their personal beauty, and their sagacity—by some called cunning ; almost everything else of their former nature was changed ; they became refined, courteous, and accomplished. William of Poitiers says Normandy was full of monasteries and schools. With regard to their drunkenness, there is not, I believe, the slightest proof that it was one of their vices—must I again recall the evening before Hastings fight ? I think an admirer of the combined descendants of Danes and Saxons should not be very hard upon the ancestors of the Normans for being either barbarians or pirates. Is Vortigern's fate forgotten ? Is the conquest of the ancient Britons obliterated from the memory of those who profess to view all the portions of history with like impartiality, and who accuse me of the contrary ? The Saxons would not have more right to the possession of England than the Normans—indeed the latter broke no pledge ; the Saxons came over as friends, and then seeing the weakness and incapacity of their hosts they broke all their promises, and turned against them, drove them from their beautiful country, massacred them, and obliged the small remnant to take refuge in the inaccessible mountains of Wales and Cornwall.

Pardon me, I think others might apply to themselves the lesson they read me with so much talent and earnestness. But perhaps the most singular part of all is the onset which has been made upon me, because my heroes were not perfect. Who ever said they were ? I am sure

I did not. But I maintain that all the names mentioned were ornaments to the institution of Chivalry. Henry the Second is objected to because he was a hard father. I confess to ignorance of that; I always thought he was only a great deal too kind to his children, though I am sure no sons ever deserved harsher treatment than his did. With regard to Philip Augustus, I have no wish to justify his treachery, but I say that a greater man never lived; and that, however we may try to believe the contrary, Cœur de Lion was nothing but a passionate bully, as his conduct in innumerable instances proved; and with regard to the Albigenses of his time, if we are to believe many accounts of them, they were not worthy of that sympathy which has been so generally bestowed upon them.

And now I come to another extraordinary statement, that St. Louis and Joinville were what they were in spite of Chivalry. How was this possible when the virtues they possessed were exactly those inculcated by Chivalry? If a pupil follows exactly the lessons and injunctions of his tutor, you do not say it was something else, we cannot tell what, that made him what he was—it was in spite of his tutor, and not because of him—we should not say this; then why say so now? It is too bad to take two of my highest ornaments away and give them to nobody knows who.

With regard to Henry the Fifth, I do not wish in the least to justify his wars against France: they were partly the errors of the time, partly the errors of his own temperament, and

partly the legacy left him by his ancestors. But Henry the Fifth performed a nobler conquest than all these, and it is for this that I put him in my list—he conquered himself. His reformation on coming to the throne is well known; the affair with Judge Cranworth is often spoken of as redounding in credit to the latter, but was it not as much so to the former? The Judge was trying one of the Prince's companions, and condemned him; in a moment of ungovernable passion the Prince struck the Judge in the face. Cranworth instantly committed him for an assault. And he, what did he do? He, a prince of the blood-royal of England, heir-apparent to the throne of England, France, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales,—a prince of a fiery and impetuous disposition, of a proud and haughty race,—committed to the rude hands of common constables? He bowed his head silently, and admitted that it was just. Here was a more glorious victory than all his conquests—a bloodless victory, which will be remembered in after ages, when Alexander's conquest of the world will be forgotten. And when he came to the throne, instead of bearing the Judge any ill-will, he sent for him, told him he knew from experience how well he performed his duty, and appointed him to one of his highest offices of the State.

With regard to the Black Prince, I am content with the praise bestowed upon him—I have no wish to make my heroes perfect; and, lest I should exhaust the patience of my readers, I must say as much with regard to the Captal de Buch, of whom my opponent owns that he

was without reproach ; yet it seems he committed one terrible action, that of saving the ladies of France—nay, even France itself—from horrors of which we have no idea. If this was his worst deed, what must his best have been ?

One of my opponents says that the Troubadour poetry is unreadable. I think this is a too sweeping condemnation. If by the Troubadour poetry is meant only that written by those strictly called Troubadours, I am scarcely competent to judge, as, with the exception of extracts from the *Romaunt de la Rose*, the *Romance de Coucy*, and a few smaller poems, I am not conversant with their writings ; but as far as I can tell, they are not what would be called unreadable, though certainly not coinciding exactly with our modern ideas. And it is worthy of remark, that in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, all those related by persons in high rank,—those who came immediately under the influence of Chivalry, such as the Knight, the Squire, the Clerk, etc.,—are extremely beautiful and pure, while those of the others are certainly the reverse. Boccaccio too, when he was dying, was so struck by the improper tendency of his book, that he begged a friend not to let it be read by the females of his household—a clear proof that he was behind his age. The *Romance of the Morte d'Arthur*, though not exactly a Troubadour's poem, is decidedly readable, as also are several others of the same kind. It is also said that the love of the Middle Ages is entirely licentious. This I do not think. Was Petrarch's love for Laura when he wrote—

She wakes within the thought of purest love
Which from the creature rises to its God,
Unsullied by the heat of mortal flame.
Through her the springs of inspiration move,
Opening so bright a path from earth's dull clod,
That Heav'n's blest joys, e'en now my soul doth claim.

Can anything be more pure than Dante's love? And all through history are there not beautiful instances of the purest and most devoted love—that of Bertha for the Emperor Henry; Philip Augustus for his Agnes; Queen Eleanor for Edward the First; Queen Philippa for the Third Edward, who with her last breath prayed him “that it may please you to take none other sepulture whensoever it shall please God to call you out of this transitory lyfe, but besyde me in Westminster”; Héloïse's love for Abelard, and many more. Louis IX., a prisoner in Egypt, replies to the Saracens that he will do nothing without Queen Margaret, “who is his Lady.” The Orientals could not comprehend such deference, and it is because they did not comprehend it that they have remained so far behind the nations of Europe in nobleness of sentiment, purity of morals, and elegance of manners.

“Chivalry,” says Michaud, “so beautifully called ‘the fountain of that courtesy which comes from God,’ is still more admirable when considered under the all-powerful influence of religious ideas. Christian charity claimed all the affections of the Knight, and demanded of him a perpetual devotion for the defence of pilgrims and the care of the sick. It was thus that were established the Orders of St. John, of the Temple, of the Teutonic Knights, and several others, all instituted

to combat the Saracens and solace human miseries. The infidels admired their virtues as much as they dreaded their bravery. Nothing is more touching than the spectacle of those noble warriors, who were seen by turns in the field of battle and in the asylum of pain, sometimes the terror of the enemy, and as frequently the consolers of all who suffered. That which the Paladins of the West did for beauty, the Knights of Palestine did for poverty and misfortune. The former devoted their lives to the ladies of their thoughts, the latter to the poor and infirm." The philanthropists of the present day should sympathise with this.

There is one thing in which I most fully agree with my antagonist—the character of Gustavus Adolphus: she cannot praise him too highly for me. But she says Chivalry was extinct in his time. The form might be, but I should be very sorry to suppose that the spirit of Chivalry is not existing now. Of Max Piccolomini I know very little, not having the advantage of an acquaintance with German literature. But as I fear I have been very obstinate about my heroes, I will take him on credit.

And now I will conclude this atrociously long effusion, begging pardon of this meeting for occupying so much of its time, and of my two fair opponents for so impolitely and uncere-
moniously contradicting their assertions.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A LONDON CHURCH

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.

LOVELACE.

“EVERY one has a romance in his own heart,” says Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and as truly may we say everything has its romance too. Not alone woods and fields and valleys and old houses standing far in parks. Not alone mountains and moors and high up mountain tarns, so very lonely, so very calm, so very pure that a kind of awe comes over you on approaching them, so very near to heaven that you dare hardly think any of your accustomed thoughts—so worldly, so mean, so unworthy of that Almighty Presence in which you then visibly stand, do they now appear. Not alone in all this, but in large and dusty towns, in the midst of counting-houses and warehouses and high, dark houses—houses everywhere—may romance be found. London abounds in churches, but though their steeples are visible to everybody, few, very few, find the edifices themselves.

I once had lodgings near one of these. There was a little burial-ground in front and a long narrow strip down each side, but the houses

came up close all round, and at the back joined the sacred edifice. My lodgings were at the corner of this little square, facing the front of the steeple, and close to which a covered archway opened into an innumerable labyrinth of small lanes which at length brought you into Fleet Street. My occupation—that of a poor, very poor, author—confining me to my room, I had little other companionship than that old church, and, oh, in the bright summer time how I blessed the sun for visiting me even there! The three lime trees in the burial-ground rejoiced with me too, and in the spring their green leaves, contrasting with the brown duskiness of the surrounding building, were more exceeding beautiful than I can well express. It used to be very silent there in the hot summer afternoons, for all around were offices and warehouses, and the unceasing hum from the great streets rather increased than otherwise the dreamy tendencies of the place, and save the occasional rumbling of a cart through the adjacent lanes, there was little other sound. Though I have called the church old, I do not suppose you would agree with me, for it could not have been built before the early part of Queen Anne's reign or the latter part of William and Mary's. This was evident from its whole appearance and from the tombs in the interior, the only effigies consisting of gentlemen in wigs, and other emblems of a similar age. There were also one or two pieces of sculpture of a more aspiring character, representing female figures weeping over urns, inverted torches and such-like, which I suppose were thought much of in their days,

but which I confess I never much admired. The only stone in which I took any interest was one on the outside of the church near the door ; it was very small, not larger than an ordinary foot-stone, with the one word " Mary " inscribed on it, with her age, 23 years, and the date, 1734. I never saw much of the rector or his curate, but the old sexton is my firm friend, and all I ever learnt concerning the inmate of this small sepulchre I learnt from him. He had heard his father, who had preceded him in his office, say that he had heard her story in his youth : that she had been the daughter of a wealthy farmer in some far-off county in the west of England, who having lost his property by some means which the old sexton did not know, had died suddenly, leaving his daughter alone in the world ; that she had come up to London, and falling perchance upon that out-of-the-way church, had lived in a house precisely opposite mine, and maintained herself by needlework ; that she had been accustomed to sit all day at the window facing the church-front at her work ; that there was about her something so fair and pure and good, that the people round about had been accustomed to look upon her almost in the light of a visitant from another and a higher world. But gradually, as she sat there in the sun, she had faded away, and before three years were passed was laid in that little grave beside the church door. There was nothing wonderful in all this—perhaps it was for this reason that I loved her story so very much, for it left room for the imagination to roam at will about her name, and frame a being of its own.

I have sat at my own window looking over the graveyard, till I could see her there before me, bending over her never-ending task, thinking doubtless of that happy home so far away, so very different to this,—of which the only resemblance was that pure and beautiful sky which in the summer time was spread out above her, reminding her of its greater purity elsewhere; and amid all her privations and sufferings and loneliness, praying for release. Release? Yes, it came at last, and from the smoke and noise of a city life into a country more bright and beautiful than that in which her childish days were spent, under a sky more calm and holy, she was carried away. The vicissitudes of this life over, all else was peace.

Certes, it was very strange that the story of this young girl whom I have never seen, whom I knew so little of, should haunt me thus. Yet for her sake I loved the church and the trees and even the dark and dingy houses round about; and as with the small congregation I listened to the refrain of that sublime litany which sounded forth, word for word, as she had heard it, I thought it all the more divine because I knew so certainly that in her days of trouble and affliction it had supported and comforted her:

By Thine agony and bloody sweat; by Thy cross and passion; by Thy precious death and burial; by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, Good Lord deliver us.

THE RINGING OF THE BELLS

I REMEMBER once, in a day's tramp in Warwickshire, I was directed to some place which I wished to reach by the help, among other landmarks, of a wayside ale-house which bore for its sign "The Old Ring of Bells." Whenever I have heard the sound of bells or thought of them—and that is very often, for I love the church bells whether in town or country—I have remembered that sign with pleasure, not only as a relief from the most part of signs, alternating between the equally impossible monsters White Lions and Blue Boars, but because it seems to me that there is something additionally pleasant in the word "Old," as if though the ring or chime of bells had become useless by age and had been replaced by a new one, the people still remembered with affection the old sound which had so often reached them over the tree-tops, calling them from all the country round to their devotions in the church. However this may have been, that love of the bells which doubtless influenced the choice of the village host seems to be common with everybody, and I think we cannot wonder at it. Independently of the material pleasure we derive from the sweet soothing of the sound, whether it

comes "over flowery fields and shadowed waters in the heat of summer," as sweetly as the south-west wind of Arcadia came to the ear of Sidney, or whether, in winter, it come more sullenly through the frosty air over frozen waters and white fields, independent of this material pleasure, there are, associated with the ringing of the bells some of the most pleasant recollections that cheer the heart of man. They are indeed a living on of the past into the present, and I sometimes wonder, in this material age, why they have not been discontinued. They belong to a time when clocks and watches were few and, in the country, rarely to be met with, and then indeed the bells were wanted to call the people to the churches. It is pleasant to think of all the Sabbaths since England was peopled, when all the steeples, all over the land, have rung out their chime-voices to the glory of God. Pleasant also is it to think of what times of trouble these bells have rung out in, soothing and calming the minds of men. In the great Civil Wars, when the unaccustomed sounds of battle and death startled the fields of rural England, preaching how different a lesson from the rattle of the musquetry! Before the battle of Edgehill, when the royal army was standing on the top of the hill waiting to begin the conflict, the sweet tones of the bells from the many churches in the plain below came up through the still Sabbath morning air, and reached the ears of the King. "Those bells," he said, "preach peace, forgiveness, and goodwill to men, and we go forward to fight!" And when the Earl of Northampton marched out of Stafford to the

battle of Hopton Heath, where he was slain, the church bells were ringing for the afternoon service as he rode through the streets. Indeed, the Sabbath bells are so mixed up with all the pleasantest and everyday recollections of our lives, from our earliest childhood to our last long resting-place, that the sound of them seems naturally to form itself into legends like the following relation, concerning a village chime of bells, which has led to the foregoing remarks.

Many years ago, perhaps almost a century, when men still wore cocked hats and swords and lace clothes, there was a small village in one of the Midland counties of England that possessed, as many small villages do, a fine large church and a very beautiful ring of bells. These bells, cast in the old popish times, had plenty of silver in them, and their soft lingering sound would rest lovingly upon the tops of the sunny wood and over the fields. About a mile from the church, but in full view of it over the meadows, there was an old red-brick house which belonged to a family who had lived there for more than four hundred years, of the name of Field. They had never produced any very remarkable men,—many of them indeed had been justices of the peace, two had been deputy-lieutenants, and one, in latter times, member for the county,—but this had been the height of their greatness. They were, nevertheless, well thought of and beloved by their neighbours, to whom, when they needed help, they were very charitable. I say neighbours because, though a wealthy family and well-landed, they

were not lords of the manor on which they lived.

To this red-brick house over the fields came every Sabbath and holy day the sound of the church bells. On the still Sabbath mornings in the bright summer time it came in through the open windows, mingling with the sweet scent of flowers and the pleasant rustling of the leaves. In the winter it came loudly through the frosty air, over the bare trees. It was hard to tell when it came most sweetly—in the sultry summer afternoons, or when in winter it sounded solemnly through the dark evenings. And they seldom rang in vain ; for year after year, soon after they began ringing, generation after generation of the Fields left their old house, and going out through the garden and along the footpath over the fields, passed through the little gate in the low wall of the churchyard, and so on into the church, to their great old pew in the chancel. And if any were left behind through sickness, or to watch by a sick-bed, they would listen to the sound of the bells till they ceased, and then in their minds they followed the service they had so often joined in, and which was then going on in the church. And one of the Fields departed out of this transitory life one bright Sabbath morning in summer, when the bells were ringing for the morning service, and some present would have closed the window of the room and shut out the sound, but he stopped them and caused himself to be raised up in the bed that he might look out over the green fields to the church, and when the bells ceased he fell back and soon after died—gone, as his friends

humbly trusted, to the great living Church in heaven, there to join in everlasting praise and thanksgiving.

But there came a time, about which I am going to write, when the red-brick house over the fields was inhabited by only three persons who bore the name of Field. Edward Field and his sister Belinda were orphans, their parents having died when they were very young. They lived here with an old maiden lady who was some far-off cousin, and who kept house for them. In their childhood they went regularly to the church, and the sound of the bells spoke peacefully to their consciences. But when Edward Field grew up he became a fine gentleman, and spent most of his time in London—at Ranelagh or in the Parks—at theatres or gambling at White's or at Almack's Tavern. When he came down to his home he brought gentlemen with him who drank deep and late into the night, and the villagers going homeward could hear their drinking songs through the open windows of the dining-room. Then they would get up late and tired in the morning and would not go to church, and Edward would try to persuade his sister not to go either; and sometimes she did not, and sometimes she would yield to the entreaties of the good old lady who lived with them, and go with her; so that there seemed to be a conflict for the soul of the beautiful young girl (for she, like all the Fields, was very handsome). But the old lady always went to church, as she had done all her life, and would sit alone often in the large old pew, very sad and sorrowful, and pray that better times

might come ; and sometimes when the people were going into the church, or even while the service was performing, Mr. Edward would ride by, and the grand gentlemen, his friends, that were with him, calling to their dogs ; but this was always when Miss Belinda went to church, for when she stayed with them she kept them from riding through the village.

And now, when he never went to church, Edward Field could not bear to hear the bells, either when they woke him out of his late sleep in the morning, or when they disturbed him in the evening as he sat drinking after dinner. As he was not lord of the manor nor even landlord of the village, he had not sufficient influence to stop the bells altogether, but he tried in all sorts of ways to prevent them being rung. He bribed the ringers to feign themselves ill, or to go away from their homes suddenly, or he sent for them up to his house and made them drunk and locked them up over night. But one way or another some one was always found to ring the bells at the right time, and he was always disappointed. The old clergyman, who had known his father, often spoke with him and laboured hard to convince him of his sin, but to no avail.

Time went on, and he grew worse and worse. He would ride out hunting on the Sabbath day, and make his hounds run the fox through the village, and one morning they killed him in the churchyard while service was performing. Indeed he went so far that the gentlemen who came down to see him refused to accompany him, and even went to church to show they disapproved of

his conduct. His sister too went there oftener than before.

At last one day he had two young gentlemen stopping with him, wild and reckless as himself; they resolved over their wine that the next Sunday the bells should *not* be rung. They kept their intention a secret from Miss Belinda, for fear she should reveal it, and took their measures so well that they bribed or sent everybody out of the place who knew how to ring the bells. The sexton was to leave the village very early in the morning on pretence of some urgent business, and the gentlemen ordered their horses to be ready at the usual hour when the bells began to ring.

It was a fine autumn morning—one of those bright cold days at the end of summer that remind one of sunlight streaming upon some old marble effigy.

At the time appointed, they mounted their horses and rode off towards the village. The horse-road was not so near as the path over the fields, and they had to make a circuit. They rode along, laughing at the perplexity the people of the village would be in, and the astonishment of the good clergyman when he came to the church and found it closed. They were now in full sight of the church, and the time was come when the bells ought to ring.

Suddenly, to their intense astonishment, there arose upon the air from the steeple where the bells were, a peal louder, nearer, and more beautiful by far than they had ever rung before. It swept over the fields and woods, which were

in their autumn foliage, and ascended up joyfully into the blue sky. Edward Field and his companions looked at each other with blank faces of dismay; the grooms, who were not in the secret, were astonished at the beauty of the sound. With a fierce exclamation Mr. Field put spurs to his horse, and, leaping the hedges, rode straight across the fields to the church, followed by his friends. The wonderful peal still continued, and when they reached the wall of the churchyard, the people were mostly come out of their houses, and were thronging to it. The clergyman was there waiting for the keys, for all the doors were fast locked. The men who brought them at last said that the sexton was gone from home, suddenly, on some business. The ringing of the bells still kept on, the door of the tower was open, and the clergyman, followed by the three gentlemen, went in. The place was quite empty, the ropes hung down motionless, and the bells above were quite still, but up in the steeple where the bells were, there was a great ringing as of a most beautiful chime or ring of bells. The clergyman turned round to the young men, who were trembling, their faces deadly pale. "This is the hand of God," he said, solemnly. "If any one here knows anything of this, let him take it for a warning, for assuredly it is a gracious sign permitted from heaven." The three gentlemen said nothing, but they pulled off their hats and went up the aisle to the old pew, dusty and mouldy from want of use, and knelt down with one accord to pray; and just then, the people being all assembled, the ringing ceased of its own accord,

and the organ played solemn and grand music, and the morning service began :

When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

SUGGESTIONS OF 'EPITAPHS'

I MUST apologise to the Essay Meeting for making choice of a rejected subject, for indeed it is not from mere caprice I choose it. Two people may pass together along the crowded highway, and when the strolling organ-player turns the handle of his instrument and plays for the thousandth time an old familiar tune, one of those two will hurry past with an ejaculation of disgust, the other turn and give his willing coin for the notes that have sent him on his way soothed with sweet thoughts and tender recollections. And this word "epitaph" is like that barrel-organ : it has a voice which every listener may interpret as he will. It can speak of poor comical attempts at rhyme engraven on the old grey head-stones of rustic burial-places ; of high-sounding eulogiums upon the titled dead, for whom the unflattering grave knows no distinction ; it can whisper sweet words of consolation inscribed by Christian mourners on the graves of their beloved ones, in token that they "sorrowed not as those which have no hope" ; and it can recall that countless number of simple tombstones which tell us only, as we carelessly pass by, that the many sleepers on whose dust we tread once lived and bore a name. And if

none of these voices are welcome, it has yet another, for it speaks of the places where epitaphs are found. How often, as we journey through this pleasant land of ours, its quiet graveyards and its old church towers lend the last touch of beauty to a lovely scene, and we forget all difference of creed in our thankful veneration for these time-worn witnesses to the faith of our fatherland! This surely is a pleasant theme; so pleasant, at least, are the pictures it portrays for me, that I venture an attempt to sketch their outlines, and offer them as a contribution to the Essay Portfolio.

(1856.)—It is a bright April day, how welcome its brightness those only who have been subjected to weeks of indoor imprisonment can tell. Day after day slight storms of snow have swept over the hills, forbidding them to resign the wintry aspect they had worn so long. Then came long weeks of rain and mist, and the farmer looked gloomily on his fields and longed to lead forth his plough, but dared not, for the ground was too swampy to bear his horses' feet. But it grew slowly finer, and day by day bright gleams of fitful sunshine stole across the valley, and we could watch the swelling of the tree-buds and the timorous shooting of the early corn. And thus with slow, irregular steps the spring drew near, till at last there came a truly genial day. This country road, with its faintly-tinted hedge-rows and wayside trees winding through a broad valley girt with hills, will be trodden by many feet to-day, but the farmer is not going to his field nor the market-woman to the little town: it is another call they will obey this morning. The

sweet, solemn tones of the bell in yonder grey church-tower bids them meet for worship and the celebration of another Good Friday. It is a pleasant sight to watch the different groups as they wind over the hills, and from the lonely cottages around, till all meet at last in the little churchyard, shaded with its rows of beech, and sheltered by the larch wood skirting the near hillside. And we, of whatever sect we are, need not fear to enter with them, for he who will preach to-day is one who has laboured long and faithfully in his Master's cause, and he speaks the truth with simple earnestness. He has lived amongst his people as curate for thirty years, and the churchyard holds two of his heart treasures, for a beloved wife and a fair young daughter, the darling of his declining years, are buried there. He is a grave and quiet man, but when his theme leads him to the borders of the better country, a smile steals over his face so bright and heavenly that you need no words to tell you how often in spirit he had visited the home where those he loved so fondly are gone to dwell. But if you would rather linger out in the fresh, glad sunshine, do so; the early primroses are smiling in the hedges, and on the bright hillsides, where the cloud shadows chase each other, the broom is venturing to unfold its petals, which shall soon array them in a robe as brilliant as burnished gold. This is the dawn of summer; we do not know now, we could hardly venture to believe if we were told, how long and glorious a summer it will be. We have waited so long for the first signs of spring; it is enough delight to inhale its

warm breath, and welcome its early signs of gladness. And there is another church, which lies two miles away, where we can go this afternoon, and very old and beautifully situated is the little church of Hope Bowdler. We must leave Caer Caradoc behind, and follow a steep turnpike road for about a mile and a half till it makes an abrupt descent towards Hope Bowdler, and the village church and wooded hill beyond lie close beneath us. We enter the village and turn into a kind of farmyard, with ploughs and waggons standing empty in the sheds, and felled timber lying on either side of it. At the end a little gate leads into the churchyard, where there are many graves. The whole place is very quiet this sunny afternoon, and a rustic with a scarlet waistcoat lounges idly against the gate and seems to wonder what has brought us here. To our great disappointment, he tells us that the church is closed, for there is no afternoon service to-day, but offers to bring the keys that we may see the interior. We enter, and are glad that we have come, though nothing meets the eye but the sternest and most primitive simplicity, the woodwork being very old and rude, and the stone floors damp and chill. It seems smaller inside than we had expected, but is quite in keeping with the quaint exterior, whose tower, with its square peaked roof, like St. Luke's of this town, is roughly tiled and thickly coated with moss. Yet it is a pleasant thought that this simple, ancient church was some few years ago regularly filled, and many even came who could not be admitted for want of room, attracted by the earnest eloquence of a

curate who resided here some time; and that his hearers came not only from the villages close by, but for miles beyond the Long Mynds in that hill-country whose people lie scattered in lonely houses far apart, where superstition loves to linger, where even at this very time a strange tale of witchcraft has gained their ready credence, and they have sent to Shrewsbury to obtain a counter spell. Let us hope that the teachings of Hope Bowdler Church may prove a better remedy.

And now we must leave the graveyard and the church and the broad field beyond, with its many yew-trees, for already a dark shadow has fallen on the fir wood and a distant peal of thunder warns us that a storm is gathering on the hills, and we must return home; and Good Friday, with its fair sunshine and unlooked-for tempest, pass away.

(1857.)—And now the rich glories of the harvest-time succeed the unwonted splendours of June and July, and the mellow noon of this sweet August day is well suited to the scene we are to visit. Our old lumbering carriage has conducted us to Lea Hurst, the grey, old, ivy-covered house with its neat little lawn and quaint thorn-tree in front, its long unpretending drive pleasantly shaded with trees, beneath which an old country-woman stands, who seems to know the place and its owners. She tells us how Miss Nightingale comes and stays here sometimes, for this is her father's country-house, and "how good and kind she is to her poor neighbours round, and what famous things she has done amongst the wars,

and how she wanted to mount a horse and go herself through the battlefield to help the poor, wounded, dying soldiers." But with true self-respect and reverence for her noble calling, she neither seeks applause herself nor will her father permit his sweet, retired mansion to be turned into a show-house; and so we must content ourselves with a hasty view of the exterior, and of the splendid prospect which the windows at the right of the house command, and return to the patient old driver who waits to take us home. Then we remember the clerk's story about Dethwick—the tall, half-dreamy looking young man who showed us Old Matlock Church yesterday, with its strangely-painted ceiling and few old monuments, and the white paper garlands two hundred years old which used to be borne by the coffins of young girls, and have hung so long in the church that they are decaying for very age. We recollect that, as we stood talking in the churchyard, he quietly remarked, "There are many other old halls and a nice church further on among the hills"; and in spite of our driver's utter ignorance of the place, we determined to try and visit Dethwick. After a very pleasant ride we can see through the trees on either side a pretty little stream, the tower of a church, and leave the carriage to find a way to it. The way is not very long, but perfectly retired—a narrow, winding lane with a low wall on one side and a fence on the other, both richly overgrown with honeysuckle and briar, which brings us at length to a little open green; a noble tree stands in the centre, and beneath it there are some white geese

feeding. These are the only living things in sight, and long rows of stone-roofed outhouses indicate the neighbourhood of a farm. Yet the old house we are approaching through that beautiful archway of carved stone overhung with creepers does not look like a farm; the side which faces the small courtyard we are entering looks more like the renovated portion of a much older and more stately mansion which has once occupied twice the space of the present unassuming dwelling. This is really the case, and we are unexpectedly gratified on finding that, in spite of its utter loneliness and the very few visitors who ever find their way to it, its historical interest renders the owners willing to show the only portions which remain unaltered since the time of Queen Elizabeth. These are the kitchens of that part of the present house which has been converted into a small farm. One of them is a large, low room, with a great old-fashioned open fireplace; the other, rougher still, adjoins it; but the farm-servants are at dinner, and we visit the church in the meantime. On our return from the church one of the maid-servants shows us these two rooms, and a lazy-looking young man, who appears to act as bailiff on the estate, stands with his hands behind him idly watching our progress thence to the garden, which he has given us leave to enter, while a girl in a stout, loose garment, like a shepherd's smock-frock, peers at us from out a kitchen furnace, which she appears engaged in cleaning. An orchard lies beyond the left side of the house, and the garden is small and simply laid out like a cottager's, but

full of flowers, and has a bee-hive near to the thick yew-hedge which bounds it. Beside Dethwick farm there is not a house in sight; the only building near it is the church, and the churchyard adjoins the garden of the right wing of the house. The keys are given us, and we are sent to explore alone. It is a pretty church, with a high, slender tower, decorated towards the top with open carving of a more elaborate kind than is mostly seen in country churches. As we ascend its winding staircase, the soft blue summer sky shines through the narrow windows, and a merry twitter from the dusky belfry draws us aside to watch the white martins fluttering round their pretty nests by the heavy, silent bell, and then we climb again till the topmost step is gained, and the lovely landscape reposes at our feet. And it does repose: there is hardly a sound to break the languid, mid-day stillness of this secluded scene. The haymaking is over, and woods and fields have caught a richer hue from the harvest suns. The fruit is ripening in the orchard, and the honeysuckle berries hang in scarlet clusters beside the few blossoms that remain, and upon the long grey roofs the moss is changing from green to amber. All is peace and quietude and plenty. And the thought is strange and sad, and difficult to realise, that from this sweet country-home went forth, three centuries ago, a young gentleman to the Court of France, to lose in that school of intrigue and vice the English virtues of straightforwardness and truth, to lend a too ready ear to the treasonable plots of Jesuits, and return to his native land only to add to the list of those

fatally misguided nobles who died an ignominious death in the cause of Mary Stuart, the name of Anthony Babington. Yet this was indeed the case. The old mansion of Dethwick was his father's house. So we stood awhile looking from the church tower upon that home forfeited by treason to the Crown, and tried to picture to ourselves the scenes in the sad drama once enacted there. We pictured stealthy rides along the lonely lanes at night, fugitives skulking in the outhouses, and nervous anxiety darkening the social board. We thought of all the deep-laid, well-concerted plans, so certain, their contrivers thought, to accomplish their design, so surely falling one by one into the hands of Walsingham. Then a day of horror and consternation when all was discovered, and the conspirators dragged from their homes to meet a traitor's doom. Could so dark a tragedy belong to a place like this? And history, which cannot be gainsaid, answers yes! But the warm sky shines down lovingly upon it, wild-flowers breathe sweet fragrance in the lanes, and many-coloured moss and lichens cling to the old grey walls, for the shadow of man's sin may darken his own threshold—the loving care of God preserves the beauty of His earth.

AN ESSAY WHICH IS NO ESSAY

"I SHALL consider it a personal favour if you write, and so will all, I am sure." This, of course, settled the matter, and I immediately repaired to our respected friends, "White and Pike," and purchased some sheets of essay paper and a Magnum-Bonum pen. Returning home with the essay paper, and the Magnum-Bonum pen, I revolved in my mind things in general and all subjects past, present, and to come ; but not one did I find but such as were unsuitable for the Essay Meeting, or had already been written to death there. In this sad condition I reached home, bearing with me as aforesaid this paper and the Magnum-Bonum. Nevertheless, though the prospect was so dismal, with a stern determination to do my duty, I unrolled the paper, dipped my pen in the ink, and—looked out of the window. This I did, not through any hope that a subject would come in to me through the window, but from a perfect vacancy and imbecility of mind. It was a very cold afternoon, but the sun was shining brightly in the blue sky ; my eye wandered over gardens and brown fields, then a belt of houses, and beyond, brown woods stretching to the horizon. In the far distance,

standing up against the sky, was the spire of a church gilt and burnished by the sun's rays. Suddenly a faint hope seizes me—spire, church, shadow, old tombs. The subject of my essay *has* come in at the window; I reach a book down—*The Beauties of England and Wales*. I turn to Warwickshire, parish Solihull. My eye glances over the page; this is what I read:

“Solihull, ordinarily pronounced Silhall, contains little to attract the notice of the examiner, except the church, which is a spacious and handsome building of the cruciform description,”—and this was all! Not even a hint that there were any tombs—not a word to hang a shadow on! How long I lay in an insensible state I do not know, but when I regained my wits, I was mechanically turning over the leaves of the book which had given me such a cruel blow. I love a topographical book, and generally in proportion to its stupidity. There is a peacefulness and quiet about all such books. I remember once, travelling by rail, by night, the engine stopped to water at a little wayside station. I had been at business all day, and my mind was full of ten, five, and two-and-a-half per cent, bills at three months, quotations, credit, and such glorious institutions of a great commercial people; what else may have been in my head was driven out of it by the noise of the train and the thoughts of railways and their adjuncts, which that noise suggested. Suddenly, as I said before, this noise ceased, and there was that exquisite stillness, that “silence sweet together” which every one must have noticed on the stopping of

a train at a small station. The night was pitch-dark and bitterly cold, and in the midst of that sudden stillness, from some neighbouring village tower, came the ringing of the church bells. It is impossible to describe the effect that so simple an incident produced. It was the realisation of the greatest contrast in life, between activity and repose, between the present and the past, between the material and ideal. How different was the mode of life between the spruce officials of the railway and that old sexton and his assistants; how different the sphere of their daily work—these vast termini, black engine-houses, and the long lines of rail, and the mouldering tower of that village church, with a bunch of misletoe and holly (it was Christmas time) hanging down from the roof! I might follow the contrast out indefinitely, but that is not my object. What that still night and the darkness and the bells ringing in the frosty air were to the bustle of commercial and railway life, just such are topographical books to the rest of reading. Elsewhere you read of the bustle and fierce struggle of life; here you read of its repose. Elsewhere you read of mankind's hopes, fears, loves, hatreds, victories, and defeats; here you read of their close and last resting-places. Elsewhere you read of the stern realities and useful things of life; here you read that "the manor of Craythorne belonged at the Conquest to the Paynells, and from them passed, by an heiress, into the family of Craythorne, in which it continued till the Civil Wars, when, the Graythornes being ruined, it was sold to J. Pudsey, Esq., in

whose family it still remains"; and that "the arms of the Craythornes—argent, on a saltier, gules, five crosses patonce, or—are still to be seen on their tombs"; and this people call stupid and won't read; and the brave and beautiful symbols on their armorial coats look dim and old-fashioned, except perhaps at rare intervals, when some simple traveller looks at them with a little kindly imagination which brightens and gilds them like the golden afternoon sunlight streaming in upon them through the stained glass. How full, too, are such books of such passages as this, which I doubt not are very unpleasant to many people: "Here lyeth in that chapelle (that of the Nevilles in Branspeth Church) a Countess of Westmoreland, sister to Bouth, Archbishop of York; also the Lord Neville, father of the Erle that now is. This Lord Neville died, his father the Erle yet living; whereupon the Erle took much thought, and died at Horneby Castelle, in Richmondshir, and there is buried in the parish church. The Erle of Westmoreland that is now, had an elder brother, and he lyeth in a little tombe of marble, by the high altar on the south side, and at the feete of hym be buried four children of the Erle's that now lyveth." This is like musing in any churchyard and looking on our latter end, and reminds you of that beautiful paper of Addison's on Westminster Abbey which no doubt you all remember, where he says: "When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I meet with the grief of parents on a tombstone, my heart melts with

compassion ; when I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow” ; and goes on, “his face” (as Mr. Thackeray kindly says) “catching quite a divine effulgence as he looks heavenward,” to speak of that great day when “we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together.”

While I am on these subjects, I crave your permission to say something about that old heraldry which people despise so much, without knowing that in many cases it was the symbol and emblem of very beautiful and noble things. For instance, how many who ridicule a cross “fichée” know what it means? It means that the Crusader had his cross sharpened at one end, that he might fix it in the earth and kneel before it to pray to God ere he went to sleep. One old family carried, for six hundred years, a “hand manacled” in their arms, through the gratitude of one of their ancestors who had been marvellously delivered from long years of captivity in the Holy Land. The family “Pringle” bore “Escalops” to show the number and devotion of their pilgrimages ; and there is a story explaining the arms of Chastillion, after which, I think, any man might have been proud to wear them.

In the days of the first Crusades a young noble of this family left his wife and two little children, whom, like the Seneschal de Joinville, he “loved in his heart,” and, accompanied by a numerous body of men-at-arms, went to the Crusade. He reached the Holy Land in safety and passed

through many fierce battles almost without a wound. But one day, riding along the sea-coast, not far from St. Jean d'Acre, he was struck with a deadly fever and obliged to halt at a small village by the sea. That same evening, as he lay dying in one of the little houses, with the Arab women crying beside him, some fishermen who had been out at sea, came to land, and, learning of the party in the village, brought their fish to sell. Among the crowd round the house was one who seemed to be a chief, an old man with a beard, whom the rest appeared to reverence. When the fishermen brought up their fish, this man made every one leave the room except the young knight's page, who was supporting his master's head on the wide couch, and, taking a portion of the roe of several of the fish and boiling it with some herbs and liquid he had with him, he poured it into a cup and brought it to the dying man. Addressing him in the French language, he told him that he was dying, that unless he assisted him, there was not a quarter of an hour's life in him, but that he had there a medicine of such wonderful virtue as would cure immediately ; but he continued that this medicine could not be taken by a Christian, and that before he took it, he must own Mahomet and deny Christ ; and as he spoke, he held the cup close to the young man's lips. The young knight was very ill, his senses were nearly gone, and he had no strength to argue with the tempter, as the latter knew very well ; but, in that supreme moment, strength was given him to say one word, and that was—"No" !

“ But consider, Beau Sire,” said the old man, “ you are so young to die, and the Souldan, our master, will advance you to high dignity and honour, and every earthly delight that you can conceive, you shall have.”

The young knight had not strength to tell him that death *would* come sooner or later, and that then all these things would be worse than of no account ; but he had just sufficient strength to say that one word again—“ No ”!

“ But consider, Beau Sire, that you will never see your home any more, nor your lady and young children, that wait for your coming, and all the friends that love you, and the fair country from whence you came. Smell it, mon Seigneur !” and he held the cup close to the dying man. It had a cool sweet smell that seemed to promise life, and, as the young man inhaled it, it seemed to give him back a portion of his strength, and with it all the delights of existence, and a fierce longing for life came over him with resistless force. He raised himself on the couch, and taking the cup from the old man, looked at him with a faint smile, as though he thanked him ; then, collecting all his remaining strength in one last effort, he flung the cup from him across the room, so that every drop of the precious elixir was lost in the sand ; and sinking back upon the couch with a low murmur and a faint smile still upon his lips, he died. And the Chastillions of Chastillion bore ever afterwards in their arms azure, three fish argent, and a chalice or. This story of fish and fishermen may remind us, not I hope unbecomingly, of certain other fishermen

more than 1800 years ago, who, on the day of which this is the anniversary, endured the cruel death of their Master that all the world might live ; in connection with which I cannot do better than conclude with one verse of the pious muse of Keble, more especially as it carries out to the utmost degree that contrast of which I spoke before :

Then like a long-forgotten strain,
Comes sweeping o'er the heart forlorn,
What sunshine hours had taught in vain
Of Jesus suffering shame and scorn ;
As in all lowly hearts He suffers still,
While we triumphant ride, and have the world at will.

THE SUCCESSOR OF MONSIEUR LE SAGE

I

IT has become almost a truism to say that the great wants of modern literature are simplicity and repose. The admirable prefaces of Matthew Arnold have sufficiently insisted upon this, and his poems (admirable in no mean degree as poems, and still more so as literary studies) have sufficiently placed before the English student the lofty tranquillity and calm thought of the great classic models.

The artificial state of society, which is the result of our civilisation, and of the universal acquirement of superficial knowledge, is continually craving for new and exciting food; and this insatiable appetite is met by the overwhelming supply of the newspaper and periodical press; by the works of fiction, with their startling incidents and involved plots, and the unnatural connection preserved between every incident from the first volume to the last; and by the numberless publications of the (so-called) "religious world," different perhaps, but not less exciting than the rest.

In the midst of all this whirl of dissipation, it is a great refreshment and relief to turn to the

works of the earlier human mind, before it became so utterly sophisticated and artificial. The feeling of repose and rest which comes over the mind after reading Arnold's *Merope* (modelled to the life after these works) is delicious. The freshness and simplicity of the allusions and descriptions, the fewness of the incidents, and the intensity of feeling produced by the few strongly defined passions on which the drama depends, all lead to an admirably calm and quiet frame of mind.

But it is not the intention of this essay to go so far back in literary history as the Greek tragedies to find a style which is, by its delightful simplicity, a refreshment in the turmoil and confusion of the world of letters of the present day.

Monsieur Le Sage wrote for a society as artificial as our own, but not so *blasé*; there was not so great a demand for literary novelty, superficial knowledge was not so diffused, and there remained still unexplored regions for the enterprises of literary pioneers. It was reserved for George Borrow to produce in the nineteenth century works equal in most points and superior in many, and a sensation as profound, as Alain René le Sage produced in the eighteenth.

When the *Bible in Spain* first appeared, the likeness to *Gil Blas* was noticed, but the approved criticism¹ seemed to be, "Yes, *Gil Blas* in water-colours." If Borrow had given us nothing else than the *Bible in Spain*, this criticism might have stood; though it would have been, as all smart sayings are, eminently superficial. I am inclined

¹ *Spectator*, Dec. 17, 1842.

to think that the chief point of resemblance which struck the critics was that both books treated of Spain and Spanish life. The books in many points are essentially different. The agent of the Bible Society goes through Spain as a passing traveller; *Gil Blas* remains for a time, more or less long in one place, taking service with various masters, and becoming acquainted with the inner life and interest of families and persons. Borrow, therefore, could only image men and women as they seemed to him in the passing glimpses afforded to a traveller (though one perhaps with unusual advantages); *Gil Blas* drew them to the life, as a man is known to his dearest friend, a hero to his *valet de chambre*; therefore, what I suppose was meant by the water-colour critique—the inferiority in the delineation of character—though at first it might seem a well-founded criticism, is in reality a necessity to the plan of the whole book. There is another point which may explain the idea which actuated the critic in the *Spectator*, the inferiority in the delineation of intrigues and vice; the critic educated to delight in the excitement of the involved plot of an intrigue, whether of ambition or of avarice or of any other passion, was perhaps scarcely competent to form an unbiassed opinion on the singleness and simplicity of the idea which was the cause of the *Bible in Spain*, but it is not necessary to pursue this part of the subject at present.

In spite, however, of these, as it might seem, two vital points, there is a great and wonderful resemblance between the two books (I take the French edition of *Gil Blas* as the original one).

And first as to style. In this it is rather difficult to decide where this resemblance lies, because the *vraisemblance* is not perfect. The style of *Gil Blas* is more polished than that of the *Bible in Spain*, the sentences are more carefully rounded. In this respect it reminds one more of that of Goldsmith, it is so excessively simple, flowing, and easy. Where then does its resemblance to the *Bible in Spain* lie? In the excessive simplicity of the words and the ideas. There is no attempt in either of the books at what is called fine writing, there is a perfect absence of any attempt at a stilted or grand class of ideas and thoughts. The most everyday incidents, the most common thoughts, are expressed in the simplest and easiest way. This gives both books an indescribable reality and charm. We are not reading the mere opinions of a writer upon certain elevated subjects, we are not reading a book full of fine writing and magnificent ideas, which find no echo in our own breasts, but we are reading the story of one of ourselves, walking upon the same earth, and looking at strange or familiar things with the same eyes, thinking of them with the same ideas, affected by them with the same emotions as we ourselves. We shall have a specimen of this style in some extracts which we shall copy presently.

The second point of resemblance between *Gil Blas* and the *Bible in Spain* consists in the exquisite description of small incidents of travel. I do not think that in this respect either book is surpassed by anything in the whole world of writing. The incidents told so simply and in so few words stand out before you, and remain in

your recollection with a graphic force and an enduring reality almost magical. I will give one instance out of *Gil Blas* ; any one may find twenty out of the *Bible in Spain*. *Gil Blas* is travelling on foot with a barber's apprentice.¹

Lorsque nous eûmes fait environ deux lieues, nous nous sentîmes de l'appétit ; et comme nous aperçûmes, à deux cents pas du grand chemin, plusieurs gros arbres qui formaient dans la campagne un ombrage très agréable, nous allâmes faire halte en cet endroit. Nous y rencontrâmes un homme de vingt-sept à vingt-huit ans, qui trempait des croûtes de pain dans une fontaine. Il avait auprès de lui une longue rapière étendue sur l'herbe, avec un havresac dont il s'était déchargé les épaules. Il nous parut mal vêtu mais bien fait et de bonne mine. Nous l'abordâmes civilement ; il nous salua de même. Ensuite il nous présenta de ses croûtes, et nous demanda, d'un air riant, si nous voulions être de la partie. Nous lui répondîmes qu'oui, pourvu qu'il trouvât bon que, pour rendre le repas plus solide, nous joignissions notre déjeuner au sien. Il y consentit fort volontiers, et nous exhibâmes aussitôt nos denrées, ce qui ne déplut point à l'inconnu. Comment donc, messieurs ! s'écria-t-il tout transporté de joie, voilà bien des munitions ! Vous êtes, à ce que je vois, des gens de prévoyance. Je ne voyage pas avec tant de précaution, moi. Je donne beaucoup au hasard. Cependant, malgré l'état où vous me trouvez, je puis dire, sans vanité, que je fais quelquefois une figure assez brillante. Savez-vous bien qu'on me traite ordinairement de prince et que j'ai des gardes à ma suite ?—Je vous entends, dit Diego ; vous voulez nous faire comprendre par-là que vous êtes comédien.—Vous l'avez deviné, répondit l'autre ; je fais la comédie depuis quinze années pour le moins. Je n'étais encore qu'un enfant, que je jouais déjà de petits rôles.—Franchement, répliqua le barbier en branlant la tête, j'ai de la peine à vous croire. Je connais les comédiens ; ces messieurs-là ne font pas, comme vous, des voyages à pied, ni des repas de Saint Antoine ; je doute même que vous mouchiez les chandelles.—Vous pouvez, repartit l'histriion, penser de moi tout ce qu'il vous plaira ; mais je ne laisse pas de jouer

¹ *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane*, livre ii. chap. viii.

les premiers rôles ; je fais les amoureux.—Cela étant, dit mon camarade, je vous en félicite, et suis ravi que le seigneur Gil Blas et moi nous ayons l'honneur de déjeuner avec un personnage d'une si grande importance.

I will not apologise for so long a quotation : it is quite delightful enough to be its own excuse.

As I said before, it is useless to quote from the *Bible in Spain*, which doubtless is in the hands of every member of the Essay Meeting. Every one must remember that magnificent chapter, the eleventh, which begins so pleasantly : " I proceeded down the pass of Mirabete, occasionally ruminating on the matter which had brought me to Spain, and occasionally admiring one of the finest prospects in the world " ; and goes on to describe so wonderfully the company round the huge fire of the *venta*, the shepherd who wished to be a wolf—the frightful story of the wolves told by the broken soldier just returned from the wars, at the end of which we seem to fall into the same dreamy doze with the writer, and to be wakened from it, as he was, by the loud voice of the beggar, relating how his gypsy friends had been captured. This, and numberless other specimens such as this, must be in the recollection of every one.

I have said that Borrow, the rival of le Sage in these respects, is his superior in some others, and I think this assertion is not difficult of proof.

First, in the religious element I contend that the noble aim of Borrow's journey, and the spirit of simple and trusting faith which accompanies

him through the whole book, give it an increase of interest, and a sustained and united sympathy, which, merely in a literary point of view, greatly enhances its value and merit. When we read such passages as the following, who will say that our interest and admiration is not increased by glimpses of such a spirit? Gil Blas is nothing but a clever, good-natured scoundrel, with no aim in view but a selfish one of his own aggrandisement; but in such passages as this Borrow reminds us of one of the heroes of the old stories of Christian Chivalry, half saint, half knight, riding through wild moors and desolate haunted forests on some holy mission or quest. He is travelling alone with an idiot boy for guide.

We soon entered the dismal wood, which I had already traversed, and through which we wended our way for some time, slowly and mournfully. Not a sound was to be heard save the trampling of the animals, not a breath of air moved the leafless branches, no animal stirred in the thickets, no bird, not even the owl, flew over our heads, all seemed desolate and dead; and during my many and far wanderings, I never experienced a greater sensation of loneliness, and a greater desire for conversation and an exchange of ideas, than then. To speak to the idiot was useless, for though competent to show the road, with which he was well acquainted, he had no other answer than an uncouth laugh to any question put to him. Thus situated, like many other persons when human comfort is not at hand, I turned my heart to God, and began to commune with Him, the result of which was that my mind soon became quieted and comforted.¹

Is not this simple and beautiful? And under the influence of the same spirit he now and then reaches a sublimity at which Gil Blas never aimed.

¹ *Bible in Spain*, p. 31.

For instance, he attended an execution for murder at Madrid. The culprit

was led up the scaffold, where he was placed on the chair and the fatal collar put round his neck. One of the priests then in a loud voice began saying the Belief, and the culprit repeated the words after him. On a sudden, the executioner, who stood behind, commenced turning the screw, which was of prodigious force, and the wretched man was almost instantly a corpse; but, as the screw went round, the priest began to shout, "Pax et misericordia et tranquillitas," and still as he shouted his voice became louder and louder, till the lofty walls of Madrid rang with it; then stooping down, he placed his mouth close to the culprit's ear, still shouting, just as if he would pursue the spirit through its course to eternity, cheering it on its way. The effect was tremendous. I myself was so excited that I involuntarily shouted "misericordia," and so did many others. God was not thought of, Christ was not thought of; only the priest was thought of, for he seemed at that moment to be the first being in existence, to have the power of opening and shutting the gates of heaven or of hell, just as he should think proper. A striking instance of the successful working of the Popish system, whose grand aim has ever been to keep people's minds as far as possible from God, and to centre their hopes and fears in the priesthood.¹

Did you ever read anything more sublime and yet more simple than the description of this scene?

This is another short sentence, the last, written at Finisterra:

As for myself, when I viewed that wide ocean and its savage shore, I cried, Such is the grave, and such are its terrific sides; those moors and wilds, over which I have passed, are the rough and dreary journey of life. Cheered with hope, we struggle along through all the difficulties of moor, bog, and mountain, to arrive at—what? The grave and its dreary sides. Oh, may hope not desert us in the last hour—hope in the Redeemer and in God!²

¹ *Bible in Spain*, p. 72.

² *Ibid.* p. 177.

There is another point of superiority in the *Bible in Spain* which I reserve for a future evening, but which I will mention now: I mean the gorgeous sunlight of romance which glows over the whole book. *Gil Blas* has no pretensions to this: it is a novel, not a romance. It is written in a perfectly worldly spirit, and looks at everything in a worldly way; but the *Bible in Spain* teems with romance, nor does this in any way take off from the reality and manifest truth of the book, which is its greatest charm. It is precisely that kind of romance which you expect to meet with in a Spanish book; which we see at once is of the very nature and extent which the romance of Spanish life must be; without which we should be disappointed in any book which professed to treat of that life, and justly so, for without it any such book would be miserably incomplete and unreal. A commercial traveller's view of Spain would probably be as absurd as John Ruskin's late idea of a paternal government, only in precisely the opposite way. Spain is a country of which Englishmen who have never left their native land can form only a very limited and imperfect idea. It is in its history, principles, and estate the very opposite to our own land. It sits (Spain, itself, I mean, for the court, whose wretched history we read in the newspapers, is isolated from the real country), in the midst of its loveliness, in a perpetual dream over its former greatness. Life in it is more a dream than a reality: its old decayed towns with half the houses unoccupied, ancient palaces turned into dwelling-houses, rare and old libraries and paintings in

secluded and forgotten cloisters, the primitive customs, the public fountains where the muleteers water their mules, the general belief in strange charms and ceremonies, the long and dangerous travelling, the whole people resting largely and contentedly centuries behind the world instead of striving frantically to keep in advance of it,—all this implies and necessitates such a total difference, such an absolute inversion of those beliefs, principles, and opinions which govern and actuate a people, that any book which did not realise them, but which regards Spain with an English eye, would necessarily be incomplete and unreal. The “Romance of the Road,” which has long been a tradition only in England, is in all its perfection in Spain. The wildness of the country, the insecurity of the ways, the lawlessness of the people, the inefficiency and dishonesty of the Aguazils and police, the length and difficulty of the journeys, the primitive modes of travelling, the incidents of inn experience, and the frequent wars which have disturbed the peace of the country, have long preserved this romance, which the improvements and progress of civilisation have banished from England and most other European countries: these and other causes, reacting upon the people, have formed a nation as opposite to Englishmen as their country is to England. The insecurity which extends over the whole land, and the utter absence of any vital religion, have fostered a superstition to be found in no other European country; yet the remains of that noble nature which once made Spain mistress of the world cast so much fascination over the faults of the

Spanish people, that to my thinking the latter romance of Spain fallen is scarcely less entrancing than the former one of Spain triumphant.

Again, what more perfect elements of romance (still with such evident truth and simplicity) could we find anywhere than in the gypsy hag's story of her life in the old mansion at Menda? The country of the Corahai (Moors); the yellow sandy desert between the town which belongs to Spain and the territory of the Moors; the fugitive soldier; the strange town on the Moorish border, full of people who had been Christians but who had renegaded to the Moors; Spaniards, Portuguese, gypsies; the black people who wandered about continually in the desert, and who were neither Moors nor negroes nor gypsies; the loss of her whole company in the wide river, and the wandering about in the mountains and the desert, howling and lamenting to the verge of madness. Where would we find a more vivid romance of real life—not less real because so different to ours—than this?

I might multiply numberless examples, such as that of the maniac under the mined tower overlooking the wild heath near Elvas; and others which, as Borrow himself says, present to our minds pictures of romance, and terror, and strangeness, such as neither painter nor poet ever dreamed in the wildest of their musings; I might fill pages with what I have not touched upon, the unsurpassed painting of scenery (as, for instance, the magnificent description of Finisterra); but this paper is egregiously long as it is, and I must stop for the present. I hope, in a second

essay, to say something about Borrow's three other books—the *Gypsies in Spain*, *Lavengro*, and the *Romany Rye*; and also to remark on two other characteristics of our author, a profound reading in the literature of all nations, and a devoted study of that science of comparative philology which is but now beginning to be appreciated as it deserves.

II

ONE of the charms of Borrow's books is their suggestiveness. This is partly owing to the learning of the author, which enables him to point out and to trace events and coincidences, both in ethnology and philology, which lead to very interesting and wonderful results. I shall say more of this when I come to speak of philology separately. The other cause of this suggestiveness is the simple way in which Borrow writes down all he saw and heard; for, if we would but take notice of them, every man's life, even the most commonplace one, is manifestly full of events and circumstances, which will suggest many worthy thoughts and unexpected truths. Many will remember the instance I shall quote of the young Alcade of Corcurion, who possessed all the works of Jeremy Bentham, whom he studied from morning till night, and considered the most universal genius which the world ever produced, and who, on seeing the Testament in Borrow's hand, said he had heard "that the English highly prize that eccentric

book. How very singular that the countrymen of the Grand Baintham should set any value upon that *old monkish book!*" I think that any one who will meditate a little on this sentence, who will try to realise the state of mind which prompted it, who will try to look at the two books from the same point of view that the Alcade did, and who, in order that he may do so, will let his mind run through the same course of instruction which the Spanish mind had been slowly treading for ages, before the Alcade *could* look at the two books from that point of view or say that sentence,—any one, I say, who will do this will find, I think, reflections which will repay him for his trouble.

In my former essay I was obliged to notice several points of difference between the *Bible in Spain* and *Gil Blas*: my work henceforward will be very much simplified. As we go on, the writings of both authors grow more and more alike; the difference in their spirit may remain unaltered, but the events they treat of resemble each other more and more, and the circumstances under which they occur approximate closer and closer.

We say the difference in their spirit may remain unaltered, for, though it varies in its aspects under the different circumstances of the books, still the religious element remains unabated through all Borrow's works—unaffected and unobtrusive, but not the less present for that. We have recently found ourselves, very unexpectedly, in the midst of a religious controversy of no ordinary depth and importance, and we now

find ourselves, not the less unexpectedly, in another. We do not wish to complain of this. We believe fully that the religious element should so thoroughly penetrate everything that no subject, literary or otherwise, should be fully discussed without some regard to it. Since our last meeting we have been told that our estimate of George Borrow's religious feeling is greatly overdrawn, that he went to Spain merely to gratify his love of travel and adventure, and that those who know him say he has no appearance of a religious man. With regard to this last assertion, we need say nothing—it is only hearsay and not admissible as evidence; nevertheless we will say that it is contradicted in every page of his books. As to the former portion of the objection, we freely admit that Borrow was peculiarly suited to his mission, and doubtless derived great pleasure from it (as indeed he frequently admits); but it is a doctrine the truth of which we have yet to be convinced of, that a man can do God's work only in the way for which He has least fitted him. In the present instance, what we must be permitted to call the bigotry of the assertion is to us almost inconceivable. Because George Borrow does not adopt the peculiar cant, the well-known stock phrases in which it is considered correct for a religious man to write—the favourite phraseology of any particular sect; because his religion is unobtrusive, and he makes no pretence or show of his feelings,—all the good he did goes for nothing, all those thousands of Testaments which he spread throughout all Spain, all his efforts for the improvement of the most degraded gypsy

tribes must go for nothing ; and not only so, but he is looked on as a worse man than if he had gone through Spain as an ordinary traveller, without one thought of religion or of God. It should always be remembered that Borrow makes no claim to be more religious than his neighbours, that he always speaks of himself as an unworthy instrument in the Divine hand, and that he appears to have adopted for his rule of life what he finely says on the death of his father : " Whatever I did or thought is best known to God and myself, but it will be as well to observe that it is possible to feel deeply and yet make no outward sign." ¹

The *Gypsies in Spain*, which was the first of Borrow's books, presents to the full some of the excellences of his style. The scenes and adventures with the gypsies are equal to anything in *Gil Blas*, and indeed very much resemble it. The account of the English gypsies in the introduction is exceedingly interesting, and would have been more so if we had not had so delightful a description of them in the author's two last works. If he had done nothing else but this—nothing but put on record what he alone of all Englishmen was capable of recording,—the life, manners, and habits of a fast decaying people, and thereby adding a chapter of great interest to the history of the world,—he would be worthy of the lasting praise and thanks of all scholars and enlightened men.

When Borrow began *Lavengro* he evidently intended to produce a correct three-volume novel,

¹ *Lavengro*, vol i.

having a plot, a beginning, an end, a hero, and a villain—a task which he was as incompetent to perform as Le Sage would have been himself. Borrow begins his book with the utmost propriety: his father the officer, his mother, his brother, the little country town,—all are brought on the stage in the most correct way, though with a reality and a beauty rarely equalled; but in a very short time the orthodox novel-reader will begin to have doubts about the book. The very slight incidents of boyhood are dwelt upon at such length, such strange subjects are introduced, there are no startling incidents; above all, he will perceive no trace or foreshadowing of a heroine. The author is evidently struggling under the trammels of a plot which he will soon cast off to follow his own way. As we go on the incidents and conversations are not those of a novel. There is none of that unnatural chain of events tending towards the final *dénouement*. The hero sees persons and things which have no effect on the story, though they all leave a carefully marked result on his own mind. People come in his way, vanish for a time and turn up, sometimes unexpectedly, to vanish and to appear again; but nothing comes of it. The characters at the beginning of his story vanish completely, to be succeeded by others. This certainly is not a novel, but it is something better. We feel it is a real man living, and that the education of his life is going on all the while. But in the novelist's craft the old schoolboy's sentence is reversed—*Vita longa, ars brevis est*. Before the story is half told, before the character is

formed, before the life is nearly complete, the end of the three volumes is reached, the law and the publishers are inexorable, and the narration breaks off without the slightest warning, to be renewed in the *Romany Rye*, and, at the end of the two volumes of the latter work, to be discontinued again as unexpectedly.

The story of Lavengro (the word means master) is soon told. The son of an officer, his natural love of travel and adventure fostered by the frequent change of scene which his father's profession obliged, the boy becomes acquainted with the homeliest and simplest forms of rural life: "amongst poore hyndes, in hils, in woods, in dales"; amidst the green lanes and breezy commons and hedge ale-houses of England; amongst her gypsies and pedlars and strolling tinkers and snake-catchers and rat-catchers and Irish labourers and harvesters and prize-fighters. Polite society will be surprised to learn that he does not find these unknown races by any means so unmitigatedly wicked as is supposed, but that, on the contrary, he finds many among them who are in the daily habit of practising several of the virtues, and hears as much truth and philosophic reasoning among them as he could reasonably expect to find among *any* class of people. He goes to London on his father's death, and endeavours to earn his livelihood by writing; and here again he becomes acquainted with many notable characters, chiefly among the poor. Finding, however, that his "translation of the Ancient Songs of Denmark, heroic and romantic, with notes philological, critical, and historical," and his

“Songs of Ab Gwilym, the Welsh bard,” also translated with notes, do not command a high price in the literary market, and having written for the magazines, etc., till he is almost ill with restraint, he writes a tale in a week, for which he gets twenty pounds, and “takes to the roads for fear of consumption.” As he has only this twenty pounds, he buys a tinker’s cart and apparatus, and sets up as a wandering tinker ; afterwards he becomes “gypsy, postillion, ostler, associating with various kinds of people, chiefly among the poorer class, and following his favourite pursuits, hunting after strange characters, or analysing strange words and names.” The characters he sketches in this wandering narration are most curious and admirable, the description of them and of scenes and incidents beyond all praise. The language (perfectly simple, plain, and unaffected) has a force and strength rarely surpassed, and not unfrequently reaches a poetic beauty and a lofty sublimity which the finest writers but seldom have had the good fortune to attain to. Over all and through all is very evident that same spirit of unaffected, all-pervading religion which sent him to the wilds of the Alemtejo and through the mountain passes of Fuencebador and the *bellotas* with the Bible in his hand as a present to popish Spain. We have no space to quote, but as a proof of this, among many others, let any one read the description of the camp meeting and the Methodist preacher in the first volume of *Lavengro*, p. 316. As an instance of the exquisite beauty of his simple diction we will quote two or three sentences. It

is the reply of a gypsy when Lavengro asks him if he did not wish to die.

"Life is sweet, brother."

"Do you think so?"

"Think so! There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?"

"I would wish to die——"

"You talk like a Gorgis—which is the same as talking like a fool—were you a Romany Chal you would talk wiser. Wish to die, indeed! A Romany Chal would wish to live for ever!"

"In sickness, Jasper?"

"There's the sun and stars, brother."

"In blindness, Jasper?"

"There's the wind on the heath, brother; if I could only feel that, I would gladly live for ever. Dosta, we'll now go to the tents and put on the gloves; and I'll try to make you feel what a sweet thing it is to be alive, brother!"¹

This is a poem, and a very beautiful one, in itself. The following description of Alpine scenery reminds one of Mr. Ruskin:—

Once, when travelling in an Alpine country, I arrived at a considerable elevation; I saw in the distance, far below, a beautiful stream, hastening to the ocean, its rapid waters here sparkling in the sunshine, and there tumbling merrily in cascades. On its banks were vineyards and cheerful villages; close to where I stood, in a granite basin, with steep and precipitous sides, slumber'd a deep, dark lagoon, shaded by black pines, cypresses, and yews. It was a wild, savage spot, strange and singular; ravens hovered above the pines, filling the air with their uncouth notes, pies chatter'd, and I heard the cry of an eagle from a neighbouring peak; there lay the lake, the dark, solitary, and almost inaccessible lake; gloomy shadows were upon it, which, strangely modified, as gusts of wind agitated the surface, occasionally assumed the shape of monsters. So I stood on the Alpine elevation, and now looked

¹ *Lavengro*, vol. i.

down on the gay, distant river, and now at the dark granite-encircled lake close beside me in the lone solitude, and I thought of my brother and myself. I am no moraliser; but the gay and rapid river, and the dark and silent lake, were, of a verity, no bad emblems of us two.¹

The *Romany Rye* (Gypsy gentleman) is only a continuation of *Lavengro*, and has therefore no plot. It merely carries on the history a little farther, and leaves the hero on the point of making a philological journey to India. Among the many admirable characters in both books we will just mention the gypsy Mr. Petulengro (or Smith), the old apple-woman, the rich gentleman who touched objects to avert the evil chance, the old gypsy hag, Peter Williams, the man in black, the landlord, the old man and his bees, the old gentleman who read runes upon a teapot, and the Hungarian at Horncastle who held Sir Walter Scott in such contempt; and certainly no review of Borrow's books should pass without mention of the beautiful descriptions of country scenery or of the picturesque bits of road travelling, at inns, on coaches, on horseback, on foot, or with a tinker's cart. We would also wish to point out the excellent presentment of different states of religious or non-religious feeling—as, for instance, the conversations with “the man in black,” and the opinions of the Elderly Personage of chapter xxiii.

In our last essay we quoted a scene from *Gil Blas*; we have only to open Borrow's two books anywhere to find scenes so closely resembling Le Sage as to mark the similarity of genius. We

¹ *Lavengro*, vol. i, chap. i.

have been trying to select one of these both as a proof of this, and as a good sample of Borrow's style and of the interest his narrations excite, but they are all too long for an Essay Meeting paper. The following, though it is nothing to many we should have liked to quote, will at least show the way he mixes with the country-people, and the kind of intercourse he held with them :—

After traversing two or three counties, I touched the confines of Lincolnshire. During one particularly hot day I put up at a public-house, to which, in the evening, came a party of harvesters to make merry, who, finding me wandering about the house a stranger, invited me to partake of their ale ; so I drank with the harvesters, who sang me songs about rural life, such as—

Sitting in the swale and listening to the swindle of the flail, as it sounds dub-a-dub on the corn from the neighbouring barn.

In requital for which I treated them with a song, not of Romanville, but the song of "Sivord and the Horse Grayman." I remained with them till it was dark, having after sunset entered into deep discourse with a celebrated rat-catcher, who communicated to me the secrets of his trade, saying, amongst other things, "When you see the rats pouring out of their holes, and running up my hands and arms, it's not after me they comes, but after the oils I carries about me they comes"; and who subsequently spoke in the most enthusiastic manner of his trade, saying that it was the best trade in the world and most diverting, and that it was likely to last for ever ; for whereas all other kinds of vermin were fast disappearing from England, rats were every day becoming more abundant. I quitted this good company and proceeded on my way.

It is not possible that I can conclude this essay without saying something about the appendix which Borrow has added to the *Romany Rye*. This part of the book has been very severely handled by the critics and others. I do not

agree with many in regretting that Borrow has written it (except perhaps in a purely literary view), for I think no writing sent into the world with such an earnest intention to do good as this evidently shows can be useless or thrown away.

Borrow's whole life (a wandering and unsettled, though in many respects a noble one) has given him an intense aversion to the conventionalisms and deceits of modern society. There is doubtless great exaggeration in what he says on this subject (we should be inclined to think through ignorance of the highest society), but there is no manner of doubt that it is exaggeration which springs from a noble source. He is enamoured of the rough, manly virtues of many of those among whom he has lived, among the lanes and dingles of the country; he is disgusted with the vices which are only too evident among the higher classes, and he adopts a partial and one-sided line of argument, which he would be the first to deprecate if applied to his own friends. Does he suppose that no faults could be found among those prize-fighters and tinkers, whose manly courage and kind-heartedness he so much admires, or that no virtues could be discovered in the sons of office-holding Whigs—even though they *do* carry that “badge of the low scoundrel puppy, the gilt chain at the waistcoat pocket”? No doubt there is folly and vice and puppyism and cowardice in many a well-dressed circle; no doubt there is much honest-heartedness and noble courage and kindness in many a poor fellow whom the world calls blackguard and brute; but to imagine that there is no courage

or manliness but in prize-fighters or the leaders of a Chartist mob is no more free from puppyism and conventionalism (though of the opposite kind) than that "gentility nonsense" against which Borrow is so severe.

Our author also (of all men he is the most qualified to do it) has much to say against the attempts of the popish priests to propagate their religion, and against that school of novels and poetry which Scott brought in, the chief characteristic of which is the praise of the Stuarts and of the Catholic or High Church cavaliers. He is no doubt right to a certain extent, and however much we may differ from him in many points, we all must confess that there is much need of out-speaking on the side he takes, and that we should not stifle a man who will speak out what he thinks is true, stoutly and originally, only because we do not agree in all that he says.

There is only one more point to mention. Borrow is very hard upon the reviewers. We think in this he has much excuse: there is far too much reviewing and trusting to reviews in the present day. It is very easy, with a noble library at command, to read up in half an hour sufficient to talk very learnedly upon any subject however deep, and any moderately clever man, whose wits are sharpened by practice, can find faults anywhere; but that the work, perhaps, of a real scholar, written with great labour and research, should be exposed to such a criticism as this, in a column or a column and a half of brilliant, shallow writing, at the whim of a person of perhaps not half the writer's real attainments, is too bad. We

do not see even that the severity of critics at all deters bad authors from rushing into print : the number, on the contrary, is alarmingly on the increase. It is said, many people have no time to read the books themselves ; they must read the reviews and so keep themselves up with the current literature of the day. Can any course of reading be more superficial and useless than that which is contented with a few sentences from the largest book, picked out and commented upon at the caprice of some nameless scribbler ? Surely one good book well read were worth a million such glimpses of books as this.

I have no space to say more upon this, or any other point, in Borrow's books. I would wish every one to read them, very certain that not only they can do no one any harm, but, properly meditated upon, they are very sure to do much good ; and I will finish with the concluding sentence of the book itself :

And in conclusion, with respect to many passages in his book in which he has expressed himself in terms neither measured nor mealy, he will beg leave to observe in the words of a great poet, who lived a profligate life, it is true, but who died a sincere penitent—thanks, after God, to good Bishop Burnet—

All this with indignation I have hurl'd
At the pretending part of this proud world,
Who, swollen with selfish vanity, devise
False freedoms, formal cheats, and holy lies,
Over their fellow fools to tyrannise.

ROCHESTER.

GEORGE BORROW AND HIS WORKS

(INSERTED)

THE season of the Essay Meeting being over, and the idea of carrying on the discussion of Borrow's merits to another winter being untenable, perhaps I may be pardoned in the somewhat unconstitutional course I have ventured to take of inserting a few parting words in the folio of Essays for circulation.

I do not wish to say anything more about our author's character—that is a subject on which every one must form his own opinion,—but the essay read at the meeting last week questions the resemblance which I have endeavoured to point out between *Gil Blas* and Borrow's works. In my first essay I said expressly that I thought the point of resemblance which had most struck the critics of the *Bible in Spain* was that both it and *Gil Blas* were descriptions of travel in the same country, and that the two books were essentially different. So far I should agree with our essayist (though I maintain that, even in the *Bible in Spain*, there are many things which remind you of Le Sage). But the great resemblance between these two authors is not to be sought in the *Bible in Spain*, but in the two last books Borrow has written (which the essayist does not appear to have read), and which are, like *Gil Blas*, works of fiction, autobiographies, and accounts of travel and adventure in everyday life, and amidst the most homely and familiar scenes and circumstances. The character of the books being therefore so similar, it is in these that the genius of Borrow proves itself to be so closely allied to that of Le Sage. I read the *Romany Rye* first, by accident, without having seen any of Borrow's other books or any review of them, and the resemblance to Le Sage struck me forcibly almost at the first page. Here is the same humour, the same skill of delineation, the same "bits" of scenery, the same delight in road-

side adventures, the same faculty of discovering interest in most unpromising places and persons, the same power of fascinating you throughout, the same reality.

Our essayist says that *Gil Blas* is a regular romance with a beginning, a middle, an end. It certainly has a beginning where *Gil Blas* is born, and an end where he is married and the book leaves off (not because the author seems to have said all he had to say, but because he seems to have thought he had said enough); but as for a middle I should be very sorry to have to find it (except by taking the whole number of the pages and dividing them by two). *Gil Blas* is like a life. The hero passes through it as we pass through any number of years of our own existence, meeting with adventures, travelling to various places, seeing many people, but there is none of that startling connection between every incident which you meet with in a commonplace novel; the story progresses not as if the author knew all the time that he was coining something out of his own brain, and therefore might say what he liked, but as though he was writing a real life, and could only say what he knew had occurred, and could no more alter the incidents than he could change his own fate. These are the facts, he says; they are not according to rule, they are not coherent, they appear strange and singular and unlikely;¹ you cannot explain them—I have nothing to do with that; my business is to tell just what occurred; these are the facts,—make of them what you can. So say Le Sage and so says Borrow in almost the same way. This may not be novel-writing, but, as I said before, it is something better.

¹ The Essay Meeting will remember the admirable critique on the ballad "La Toilette de Constance" in the third volume of Mr. Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, p. 167.

SUNDAYS AT THE SEASIDE

VERY pleasant to us inland people are our recollections of the sea and of sea-life. All our lives we have delighted in the tales of sea-daring and adventure, of smugglers' haunts and exploits, and of the thousand picturesque scenes and stories which have the salt of the sea fresh upon them. And which of us who have been so fortunate as to see them can forget the old seaport towns, with their narrow, winding streets and quaint, overhanging houses, crowded round the little harbours under the shadow of the sheltering cliffs? Who can forget those scenes, which the lover of such places so often sees, reminding him of the old harbour-pieces of the Dutch painters, where, behind a foreground of fishing vessels and forest of masts and rigging, there rise the red-brick, red-tiled houses whose white smoke curls gracefully up into the sky, casting its faint, wavering shadow on the green background of the cliff? I have seen the seaside under not a few aspects and in not a few places, and I am going to try to describe to you how very pleasant—ay, I may say, how very beautiful and noble—it has seemed to me on shining, summer Sabbath days.

Such a day as this, the first that I remember,—

so shining, so full of summer life, so hushed with Sabbath stillness,—was one on which I took a walk in Wales near the Great Orme's Head. Leaving the shore, and passing behind the Little Orme's Head at the other end of the bay, my road led me through narrow, rugged lanes, enclosed with high banks, fragrant with honeysuckle, and opening every now and then to disclose peeps of surpassing beauty—up upon green hillocks crowned with trees, or down into lovely valleys watered with rustling brooks—while every now and then, behind the hillocks and the trees, shone out the coronet of the earth's beauty—the distant, shining sea.

When the eye has been gazing over the varied beauties of the land, how inexpressibly noble and beautiful is that bright expanse!—so majestic in its calm, so placid in its unvaried singleness, so gorgeous in its shaded colours, silent as a dream, and up and down which the white ships go sailing, like sweet fancies passing through a fairy vision! All through that day's walk I was learning one page in the sea's Sabbath lesson—its wonderful beauty. For a time I turned away from it and passed through a sheltered valley, along a path through fields full of the mown hay or ripening for the harvest. I passed also through a little park, and at the front of an old mansion of the Mostyns, which overlooks the beautiful plain, guarded by the ever-watchful hills, that reaches towards Abergele; but through all this the impression of the sea was upon me, and turning back towards the right, I came out suddenly upon a low range of hills between two summits, and

stood still to look. Beneath me lay a flat, barren land; on the right hand was the Little Orme's Head and Llandudno Bay; on the left hand was another bay; and right in front of me, rising up like a great mountain out of the sea, was the Great Orme's Head—huge, vast, massive, containing in itself valleys and hills, a village, and a population. All around again, as far as the eye could reach, was the encircling sea. As I gazed upon this glorious prospect, I tried to gain something of that deep instruction which most certainly it is our own fault if we do not gain, from a vision of such beauty shown to us amidst the sweet, holy gravity and solemn stillness of a summer Sabbath morn. And it seemed to me that, when I looked upon it and thought of Him who made it, and by His ever-constant, loving care keeps it in its beauty, I might say, not to speak it lightly or irreverently, but with uncovered head, that, like the women of old at the sepulchre, I also “had seen a vision of angels, *which said that He was alive!*”

Another Sunday by the sea is before me in a very different scene. It is another splendid, summer morning. On a lofty promontory by a ruined castle is a large and magnificent church. Inside the ground is much lower than outside, giving the interior a height which we did not expect. There are three long aisles divided by pointed arches and columns, which cross and intersect each other to the sight with a most beautiful symmetry. High up in the tower the bells are ringing musically, and the avenues to the church, and, presently, the church itself, are

crowded with a gay and fashionable company ; for it is the height of the season in one of our most frequented watering-places. For a long time there is no room for them to be seated—the aisles, the benches, the free seats, the pews—all are occupied. There are many of the aristocracy and of the chief gentry of the land present—the ladies gorgeously and magnificently dressed, the gentlemen in the extreme of the fashion. Suddenly all this gay and brilliant crowd, whether they have found places or are standing in the aisles, becomes very reverent and still, for the bells above cease ringing, and from the upper end of the church resound those sonorous words of high import that form the service of the Church of England : “ Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord ; for in thy sight——” And in the ears of this assemblage, which many would call frivolous and unreflecting, but which, for all that, is now very grave and decorous, are rehearsed those old simple stories of the Patriarchs, which are the first things we learn at our mother’s knee ; and in the deep tones of the organ, and in a thousand tuned voices, swells up towards heaven the magnificent music of the Kingly Psalmist, which three thousand years ago he sang to his people in Jerusalem. And through all the service we are conscious, and at the end, when we come out, we see, that all around us lies, first, the crowded churchyard, where thousands lie asleep in expectation of the final waking, and, beyond that, a glorious prospect of sea and land ; of the ruined castle above us, of the old town and harbour beneath us, of the new town full of stately houses

beyond, of the yellow sands (on this day alone so bare), and of the far-stretching country and still farther-stretching sea ; and that above us the blue, unclouded heaven is over all.

After church let us go down to the harbour, which is full of shipping, all decked out with gay flags, in honour of the day. It is quite dry, for the tide is out, and in the outer harbour are a multitude of fishing vessels, packed together as close as they can lie. They are crowded with the fishermen and fisher-boys, with their blue-worsted shirts and scarlet caps. They look very clean and bright and picturesque sitting about upon the ships. Some are playing together, some getting their dinners, some mending their nets. Nor are they, as we hear, wholly without higher occupation for the day. There are many Methodists in the place, and sailors' homes, and sailors' missionaries, and as you go through the streets you often meet a long procession, singing hymns and walking through as many streets as they can, gathering by degrees a long train behind them, till they reach the chapel to which they belong. And the same blue, unclouded heaven is over the chapel as was over the church upon the hill above it, and the same God beholds them both.

It is afternoon. Let us leave the harbour and go across to the Spa, where the great company walk. They too, as well as the fishermen, have their notion of doing honour to the day. They are carefully dressed in their town dresses instead of being, as on other days, in their country *déshabillé*. They have been to church in the morning, and many will go again in the evening,

but now, before dinner, they come out to walk. And the same blue, unclouded heaven is over these great people as is over the fisher-boys in the harbour, and the same God sees them both.

One more Sabbath and I have done. It is afternoon, again most beautiful and bright, on the sands near the harbour. Before a half-finished vessel, still on the stocks, there is a great crowd assembled, chiefly sailors and towns-people, with a few gentlemen strayed from the other end of the town. Behind them is the old town rising roof above roof till crowned by the old castle and church, and right opposite, across the bay, stretch far southward the long range of cliffs, shaded by the passing shadows like faint imaginations stretching away into dreamland, to Filey and Flamborough Head. Why are all these people standing here? From the platform that runs round the half-built ship the Rev. Newman Hall will preach this afternoon. After the hymn is sung he comes forward—a tall, elegant, intellectual-looking man, and begins to speak. His eloquence is very simple, and his illustrations taken from the things around him. He tells us that, having to address us this afternoon, he has been thinking what he should say, and, remembering the great flood there has been in that place lately, he thought that he would talk to us a little of that great flood that covered all the earth four thousand years ago, and of the ark that rode safely upon it; and that, passing from that, he would tell us of another ark, Christ Jesus, into which if any man come, though the floods and the storm threaten him, yet he shall be safe. And for more

than an hour he spoke of that eternal, never-failing refuge in the language best suited to his hearers—that of the sea. Many of the sailors present were, to judge from their faces, delighted with the allusions to their own manner of life. Let us hope that it was not only this that made their faces light up with pleasure. A man near us remarked that it was a “goodly number”; let us hope it separated bearing goodly seed.

Have I made out my story clearly? Perhaps not. The lessons that the mind takes in are easier felt than described, and things which are, to some, very suggestive of many deep and beautiful thoughts, fall unmeaning on other ears. It has seemed to me that, as in other places, so on the seashore, the sun shines brighter on the Sabbath than at other times, and that the sea, and the other works of God, have a deeper and a nobler lesson than on other days; and that the eternal rest, foreshadowed in the Sabbath, is not without its influence on the mind. If I have, in ever so faint a manner, expressed this, it is enough. If I shall cause any one to remember that he too has felt something like it, I shall not feel that I have written in vain.

BEDE

THE *Encyclopædia Britannica*, in its article on the Venerable Bede, says that his *Ecclesiastical History* is very valuable, in spite of the superstitious legends with which it is deformed. This sentence would seem to mark the article as having been written some years ago, when the study of popular legends was much less valued than at present. Far from agreeing with this conditional praise, I think it would be very hard to find a book that so well supplied what a student would desire to have. Let us suppose that we were told for the first time that there was a writer living in England nearly twelve hundred years ago, associating with the most learned and pious men, and yet by his calling placed also in continual fellowship with the common people—the husbandmen, labourers, sailors, and fishermen of that time—should we not wish that this man's book should not be merely a dry narration of facts, but should take us at once into the life of those times? Should not we wish to go with him into the monasteries, churches, towns, woods, and fields of England as she then was, into the libraries, refectories, and guest-chambers of the monasteries, into the palaces of the kings, over

the lonely moors and uplands, and into the scattered inns and houses in the desolate country-places, into the shepherds' huts, and into the sailors' and fishers' boats? All this and still more we see visibly painted for us in the simple Latin of the old monk.

There is a striking and interesting difference between the histories of Bede and those of some other of the monkish historians a few centuries later, especially Geoffrey of Monmouth and Nennius. From the picture of the Anglo-Saxon people in their best days, as depicted with such evident truth by Bede, from their homely life and feeling, we turn with distaste to the unreal stories of Geoffrey, such as that of Lear, for instance—stories which, however attractive Shakespeare may have made them, have no particle of reality as connected with the early history of our island, and are evidently nothing but the invention of a retired "Literator," acquainted with the classic models, and utterly careless of recording or preserving the true thought and action of his age. Following this subject farther, an exact analogy of this difference in historic writing may be traced to two distinct kinds of religious legends. The first are those which the people formed for themselves out of such worthy materials as the long-remembered life of a good man whom they had received benefits from, and whom they still loved in spite of death; the occurrence of strange and unexplained incidents, in nature or in human life; and above all, a simple faith in the reality of God's presence and of His ruling over men. The other kind are those which ecclesiastics invented in

their cells, for the glory of their several orders, and in some instances no doubt from a disinterested affection for the memory of their departed brother, and a desire to forward the spread of religion. I believe it would not be difficult to determine to which of these two classes any particular legend belongs. If my test is a true one, it must be confessed that the writings of Bede contain both kinds, although the former are vastly more numerous than the latter. In his *Beati Felicis confessoris Vita*, a very beautiful book, he records that the saint being wanted to succour an ancient bishop who had fled into the wilderness to escape his persecutors, is released from prison by a miracle suspiciously resembling that worked on behalf of St. Peter. But so seldom does this kind of legend occur, that, at the moment of writing, I cannot remember more than one or two instances of it in our author's books. On the contrary, at the end of this very life of St. Felix, there is a beautiful instance of the nobler sort of legend, evidently springing fresh from the heart of a simple and needy rustic life. In accepting which legend, which is simply the account of a poor man who recovered his two oxen, his sole support, when stolen by thieves, we are not by any means obliged to pledge ourselves to the doctrine of the intercession of Saints, nor need we be very positive that any miracle was performed at all, but we may perhaps see in it something of a rude country-life elevated, and a weight of poverty lessened, by the glimpse of a divine truth.

Bede's most attractive books, of course, are

the *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Life of St. Cuthbert*, and the *Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, his own monasteries. Let us turn over a few leaves of the *Ecclesiastical History*. Whatever may have been the influence of the Romans in England, we find no trace of it in Bede. Whether the whole of the cities built by them were totally destroyed and swept away during the wars that immediately succeeded their leaving the island, and their institutions, manners, and almost their very memory, were forgotten like a dream, or whether, as Mr. Wright¹ wishes to prove, the cities remained for centuries in some degree as the Romans had left them, and exercised a very marked influence in forming the English constitution, I have no space to inquire. But a study of Bede would, I believe, lead us to conclude that the former theory was the correct one. Not only is there no trace of the influence of the Romans on the Saxon people to be found in his books, but the character and habits of that people as there described are totally opposed to the classic refinement of the Roman colonist. As we turn over the leaves, England seems to us one great woodland, with sparse towns and hamlets, monasteries, churches, and religious houses not a few, common land in abundance, lonely uplands and moors, traversed only by shepherds and their flocks. A simple people fighting a good deal; not so much given to hunting as to friendly meetings in each other's houses; deeply religious, with a fondness for miraculous stories; not altogether unable upon occasion to stand the

¹ *The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon.*

martyr's test, though in Bede's time the necessity for this had nearly gone by ; not altogether unlearned, particularly if connected in any way with the monasteries,—Alfred, King of Deira, giving eight hides of land (about eight hundred acres) for a "beautiful book of the geographers" which the Abbot Benedict had brought from Rome ; not entirely unaccustomed to the luxuries of polished life. "In the courts of princes," says Bede, "are men and women moving continually in splendid vestments,"—very strict in their moral laws, as the same extract goes on to prove. In common with the rest of the world, their exposed and hazardous life, and their constant familiarity with uncultivated nature, brought them in imagination very near to the spirit world. The traveller on horseback through the lonely woods and moors, when he reached at last, after many strange sights, the monastery where he asked shelter for the night, was entertained during supper, in the guests' apartment, with stories of the temptation and triumph of saints, of the personal appearance and conflict of evil spirits, of miraculous gifts and mercies, of delicate women made strong in martyrdom, and of horrible rites of pagan people, inspired, he was taught, directly by the Fiend. Lying down to sleep after supper, he heard the wind moan and sweep through the vast branches of the primeval forest that came up nearly to the abbey walls ; sometimes the moonlight threw pallid shadows across his bed ; every now and then some strange cry came to him from the depths of the wood—it might be of some beast, but not at all impossibly of that Wicked One that

“walketh to and fro upon the earth.” In his next day’s ride there happened to him such adventure as this. Oswald of Northumbria, king and saint, fighting desperately against the pagan Mercians in the wilds of Lancashire, was slain in a great battle and his army routed. Not long after a man was travelling near the place; his horse, which had gone a long way that day, here broke down altogether, and fell to the earth dying. But happening to fall on the exact place where the blessed king was slain, the virtue of the spot was so great that it restored him at once to his former strength. His master, riding on a little farther to an inn, and finding there the niece of the landlord (*paterfamilias*, the Latin calls him), who had been ill for a long time, recounts his adventure for her benefit, and she, being taken out and laid on the spot, is also restored to health. Another traveller, also riding by the same place, is struck with the fresh appearance of the herbage on it, and being, as Bede says, of a reflective and religious mind, immediately concludes the ground to be possessed of some extraordinary virtue. He dismounts, and taking some of the earth in a bag, takes it away with him. Riding a little farther on, he comes to a village, and enters a house where the neighbours were feasting at supper. The house, like most others, was built of one principal room with an open (unceiled) roof. Being received by the master of the house, he sat down with the others at the feast, hanging the bag in which he brought the earth on a post against the wall. They sat long at supper, and drank hard. There was a great fire in the middle

of the room, and the sparks flying up, caught the roof of the house, which, being composed of wattles and thatch, was soon in flames. The guests ran out in a fright without being able to stop the fire. The house was entirely burnt down; only that post on which the earth hung remained entirely whole and unsinged. Of course, I do not quote these stories for the miracles, but for the pictures they show us of the old Saxon life. Is it not indeed worth while to think a little on these antique travellers, so infinitely removed from their successors of to-day in everything—in their ways of travelling, in the objects of their journeys, in the sights they saw, and still more in the sights and things which it *was supposed possible* that they might see and encounter? As, for instance, that young traveller that St. Augustine tells of, who, watering his horse at a brook towards evening, was suddenly confronted and possessed by a devil, and underwent terrible torments until cured by divine aid. As we turn over the pages, we are taken into every scene that these travellers themselves could have come into. Into the monasteries,—as in the *Life of St. Cuthbert* we are taken into the travellers' apartment of one of them, where he entertains an angel whom he supposes to be a traveller, driven in for shelter by a heavy fall of snow, and who, departing, leaves no mark of his feet on the white ground; into the country houses of the princes and nobles; into the inns; to the houses of the parish priests, like that of Bishop Aidan, "a church and a few fields about it"; to small oratories and cells in the woods; past the

stately monasteries in the forest from which arise the notes of singing, like that of Lastingham, to the door of which Owini, favourite of Queen Ethelred, forsaking the world, came, quitting all that he had, clothed in a plain garment, and with a hatchet in his hand to denote that he came for work and not for idleness, and near which afterward cutting wood in the forest, he one day heard miraculous melodies ; into the palaces of the kings, like that in the story of Edwin the Etheling. Edwin, afterwards King of Northumbria, fled from the pursuit of his enemies to the court of Redwald, King of the East Angles. When Ethelfrid, who was persecuting him, heard where he was, he sent messengers to Redwald, his host, and after a long time, partly by threats and partly by promises, induced him to promise either to kill him or to give him up. The Etheling, being warned of this by a friend, as he was going to bed, and being afraid to stay longer in the palace (which consisted of several buildings together surrounded by a wall, the gate of which opened into the street of the town), and being equally uncertain where else to go, went out, before the gates of the king's house were closed, and sat down before the entrance. Here he sat through the night in great trouble of mind, not knowing what to do nor where to turn himself. When the deadeast hour was past, just before the first ghastly light of morning came over the distant woods, there came to him, walking up the street, a person whose face and habit were equally strange. This person, after inquiring what he did there at that dismal hour, sitting alone and

melancholy when every one else was asleep, comforted him, telling him that no evil should happen to him, but that he should escape from his enemies and attain to greater power than he ever expected. But he charged him, by the gratitude he owed to one who brought him such comfort, that, at a future time, when a man should come to him, giving him better and more useful advice for his life and health than any of his kindred had ever heard of, he should remember that night and submit to that man, and follow his wholesome counsel. This strange visitant had scarcely departed before his friend who had before warned him came out of the king's house to him, to tell him that Redwald had changed his mind, having been persuaded by his wife not to sell his good friend, when in such distress, for gold, nor his honour for lucre of money. Years afterwards, when Edwin was on his throne, Bishop Paulinus converted him to Christianity, by recalling to his memory his heavenly visitor in the hour of his distress.

We follow St. Cuthbert in his preaching, to the "villages and out-of-the-way places among the mountains," and to the lonely shepherds' huts which they built for their shelter during the summer nights. "It was then the habit of the English people to flock together whenever a clerk or priest entered the village, that they might learn something from him and amend their lives." We are taken to the sea-coast at Lindisfarne and Monk Wearmouth; we see before us the wide expanse of the lonely ocean and the wild, wooded shore; we see the first arrival of the few feeble

monks ; their wooden houses and huts ; their persecutions by the rude inhabitants, who did not like the men who had changed all their old customs and beliefs ; the dangers they encountered—at one time driven out to sea in their little fishing-boats, bringing wood to build their houses—at another half-perished with cold and hunger from the failure of their scanty crops. We see the improvement that took place ; we see the great Abbot Benedict arrive, the stately building he put up, his library, his beautiful pictures, his carpenters and artificers in stained glass, his teacher of the choristers, all brought from Rome. Out at sea off Lindisfarne we see the lonely island-rock where St. Cuthbert passed so many years, in a hut dug down in a hollow and surrounded by a wall, so that not even the view of the dreary ocean expanse and distant coast should disturb his meditations. We see the flocks of sea-birds sweeping over the dancing billows—birds which for so many centuries had been almost the sole inhabitants of those wastes, and which then saw for the first time the predecessors of that thronged populace which now has almost destroyed them off the face of the waters. A few years after Bede was laid to rest by their brink, these lonely waters were to be visited by unwelcome ships, carrying the destroyers of the Saxon monarchy. At the conclusion of Bede's *History* he says :

Such being the peaceable and calm disposition of the times, many of the Northumbrians, as well nobles as common people, having leisure to lay aside their weapons, rather inclined to dedicate themselves and their children to learning and the monasteries than to the practice of arms.

Turn over a few more pages of the *Saxon Chronicle*, and we read the short entry that had such a terrible significance :

Anno 787.—This year King Beotric took to wife Eadburga, King Offa's daughter ; and in his days first came three ships of Northmen out of Haeretha land. And then the reve¹ rode to the palace, and would have driven them to the king's town, because he knew not who they were, and they slew him. These were the first ships of Danish men that sought the land of the English nation.

But Bede has lain peacefully beneath the porch of the church at Jarrow fifty-two years.

The Essay Meeting is hardly the place for it, or Bede would take us into the library of his monastery, and would give us very much admirable instruction, both human and divine. It is curious that, in the midst of what is called the darkest age, a book should have been written in a remote corner of England like his *De Natura Rerum*, which, in spite of the errors it contains, teaches a method of the study of nature perfectly sound in principle, and more natural truths, and fewer errors than any known book on the same subject. "It is evident," says Mason Turner, "that the establishment of the Teutonic nations in the Roman Empire did not barbarise knowledge." I should like to have translated several excellent passages, both from this book and from his books on *Times* and *The Reason of Times*, but I must deny myself. I confess I have read but little of his homilies and dissertations on the Scriptures, but Dr. Giles says "he who studies them with care will be surprised at the

¹ Now sheriff.

comprehensiveness with which he treats his subjects." In speaking of the religious element in his books, I may say, however, that in reading them we understand (as when reading St. Augustine and some others also) something of the "ages of faith," and see that, however great may be the names of some of the opponents of the theory, there have been ages in the history of Christianity of such a character as to justify so noble a title. Following, as Bede says himself, *ac viam patrum*, there breathes in his writings that fervent desire which animated them of elevating the spiritual life above the temporal, of realising the unseen, of throwing off the weight of the fleshly will. "It is good for a man," says the Vulgate, translating the 27th and 28th verses of the third chapter of Lamentations—"it is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth: he shall sit alone and shall be silent, *because he shall raise himself above himself*." It is not the sense of the Hebrew, but the idea was so constantly present to St. Jerome, as to the rest of them, that it formed a refrain to all he thought and did and read.

I have given a very faint idea of the peculiar charm which hangs about this old monkish book. Of its simple and pure faith, of its religious calm, of its homely friendliness and humanity, I have said little or nothing. I know of no book written so long ago that takes a stronger hold on your sympathies—that makes you more akin to a people so distant from you. The pictures of that old primeval life, no matter of what people or land, whether Hellenic or Roman or Saxon pastoral

(when, in a life of such rudeness and simplicity, the individual man possessed a cultivation¹ in its manner as complete, and a spiritual life in its way as exalted as our own), have a touching pathos and beauty upon which the modern intellect, jaded and weary, delights to linger and to reflect. I have taken, in conclusion, one sentence of almost a perfect beauty ; by a sort of mysterious fitness it is found not in the *De Natura Rerum*—in the book of science—though it speaks of fire, nor in the book of homilies, though it speaks of faith, but, where the noblest things of the world ever are found, in the record of the life militant of the righteous man :

In the case of the real fire which he thus extinguished he imitated that venerable priest, Marcellinus of Ancona, who, when his native town was on fire, placed himself in front of the flames, and put them out by his prayers, though all the exertions of his fellow-citizens had failed to extinguish them. Nor is it wonderful that such perfect and pious servants of God should receive power against the force of fire, considering that by their daily piety they enable themselves to conquer the desires of the flesh, and to extinguish all the fiery darts of the wicked one ; and to them is applicable the saying of the prophet, “when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the fire kindle upon thee.” But I and those who are, like me, conscious of our own weakness and inertness, are sure that we can do nothing in that way against material fire, and indeed are by no means sure that we shall be able to escape unhurt from that fire of future punishment which *never* shall be extinguished. But the love of our Saviour is strong and abundant, and will bestow the grace of its protection upon us, though we are unworthy and unable, in this world, to extinguish the fires of vicious passions, or to put out the flames of punishment in the world which is to come.

¹ See *Edinburgh Review*, October 1858, Mr. Gladstone's *Homer*.

THE "MORTE D'ARTHUR" AND THE "IDYLLS OF THE KING"

. . . but the colours were all grown faint ;
And faint upon their banner was Olaf, king and saint.
MORRIS.

I

It is impossible not to feel dissatisfied with the reviews which have appeared of the Laureate's last poem, though certainly, if number can compensate for deficiency in quality, the literary world has had nothing to complain of. It is hard to say to what class of readers most of the reviews of the *Idylls* can have been of any use. The poem is not so long but that any person who has the inclination can read it for himself, and most of the papers in the magazines upon it give him no information that he would not obtain in the book itself. I do not pretend to have read all of them, but most that I have seen consist only in a long string of extracts, with a paragraph or two at the end containing some remarkably new truism, either on the peculiarities of the poet or, if the reviewer is very erudite, on that much-wronged subject, the Arthurian Romances. In the first number of *Macmillan's Magazine*, indeed, there is

a paper on the "Moral Aspects" of the *Idylls*, but it deals with the book merely as a modern poem, except in places where it has to draw comparisons not at all favourable to the old romance.

In no review that I have seen has there been any attempt to consider the book and its contents as a whole—that is, first, the Arthurian Romances generally; secondly, Mr. Tennyson's success or failure in reproducing them. I make no pretence, in the present short essay, to do more than suggest the subject.

Those writers who have reproduced in a modern form the antique legends of the past have often enjoyed very great success, but it is plain that this success must depend on certain conditions—either they must preserve faithfully the spirit as well as the exterior form of the legends (in which case a wide success amongst modern readers is hardly to be promised them); or the age which gave birth to the legends must not be so distant that every trace of the leading idea of that age is lost; or, lastly, the subject of the legends must be simply one of the common wants and fears of humanity, which are alike in all ages, and which the animating spirit of every age, however different, suits and inspires equally. Mr. Tennyson has observed none of these conditions, and it is, as I take it, a natural consequence that he has failed.

The first of these conditions was observed by Mr. Morris in his *Defence of Guinevere*, which, speaking advisedly, is the most wonderful reproduction of the tone of thought and feeling of a past age that has ever been achieved. This book

met, as was to have been expected, with the least possible success; *The Saturday* and *The Atheneum*, with the rest of the reviews after them (with one honourable exception, *The Literary Gazette*), putting it on one side as a mass of rubbish that could not be understood. The author's most deadly enemy could not have invented a more condemnatory judgment on the book than that (as the reviewers understood the words) it *could* be understood. Did it never strike these gentlemen that, if a man opens a book written in the spirit and the manner, and influenced by the modes of thinking, of six or eight centuries ago, he is likely to find what he reads there rather different from a modern book on the electric telegraph, or the last new young ladies' novel, fresh from a nineteenth-century English village, with its classes at the school, and district visitors and the rector and his curate? Yet, what a hostile and contemptuous verdict was given against the book because the phrases and forms of expression were not exactly those to which the present century was accustomed, and because some of the poems really do require a careful study of the literature of the age of Chivalry to understand them at all! Mr. Morris, if we may judge him by his writings, is not a man to regret the course he took, or to consider his labour thrown away; and, even if he doubted it before, the publication of the *Idylls of the King* has proved that, if the Arthurian Romances ever are to be worthily rewritten in modern poetry, it will be as he has done it, and not otherwise. Writing a romance of Chivalry in a modern popular form is itself an

anomaly, and (of the three conditions we have named, the two last being obviously excluded by the nature of the subject) Mr. Tennyson had no course left him but to reproduce the lifeless form of the legends, animating the characters by his genius into some sort of galvanised life, but preserving not the faintest gleam of that spirit which alone gives to the tales of knight-errantry a vitality and a never-dying truth.

If we will trace the course of Christendom through the stormy centuries which preceded the eleventh and twelfth, we shall, I think, have no reason to be surprised that the form which its advancing enlightenment took, after passing through such an ordeal and such a teaching, was a chivalrous one. The progress of order and settled government and the spirit of Christianity, going forth hand in hand on their mission, naturally united in one the character and ideal of the Christian warrior—the king and the saint. This character was actually presented to men's sight in Charlemagne, in the German Emperors Heinrich der Vogler and Friedrich Rothbart, in our own King Alfred, and others; and that fond popular love and gratitude which, acknowledging its need and dependence on such a character, looked wistfully for years towards that hill over Salzburg, round which the ravens always hover, and within which the great Kaiser lies asleep, was the same feeling that made the romance-writer complete the ideal of the popular hero by the prophecy that, in after years, he should come forth again out of "the Vale of Aveloune," healed of his wound, and "do judgment and justice" and

repress wrong ; if indeed both these ideas have not, as all true human ideas have, their common centre and antitype in a still nobler One—martyr, king, and saint—who “shall stand in the latter days upon the earth.”

The Scandinavian nations were highly chivalrous, and possessed every knightly quality save just that which Christianity was necessary to give ; and a comparison between the stories of the Eddas and the romances of chivalry will show that nothing was wanting but this finishing touch to produce the chivalric character among our Norse forefathers. That character was perfected amid the desperate conflicts with the irreclaimable pagans of Prussia and Sclavonia, amid the crusades against the eastern Mahommedans, and amid the gradual formation of comparative order and peace in Europe, under the softening and sanctifying influence of the Church.

The knightly character thus perfected, and as it is shown in the romances of chivalry, is, in many respects, a very noble one ; and those romances which treat of its highest development are among the noblest and purest books ever written ; but their moral is essentially and inseparably connected with that age and character, is not suited to any other age, and least of all can be applied to a reproduction of the forms of chivalry, without the spirit which gave them life. The story of the finding of the Sancgreal, and of the repentance and purification of Sir Launcelot, is perfect in its kind ; but in Mr. Tennyson's poem the story of Guinevere assumes quite a different aspect, and is associated in our minds with circum-

stances which would influence a similar story in the present day, of which neither the actors in nor the writers of the original legend conceived anything. The *Idylls* are false in the very groundwork of their conception. The Arthurian Romances are medieval or they are nothing—take away their medieval character and they are utterly worthless; but Mr. Tennyson evidently wavers between the romances and the old faint legends of Wales and Brittany. He talks of the *Romans*,¹ and in his description of the throne of King Arthur in the lists,¹ and “the dragon of the great Pendragonship,” there is a barbaric magnificence which is not medieval, and jars on the sense of historic unity. One of the influences which wrought deepest on the knightly character was the continual presence of danger, heightened and animated by beings and events supernatural. The dark and gloomy nature of the scenery of Europe in the Middle Ages, the vast forests, pathless mountains, and bridgeless rivers; the belief in the constant presence and frequent appearance of demons and spirits, round every unfrequented monastery and lonely graveyard,—all had much to do in forming the ideal of chivalry; yet many of the reviewers congratulate Mr. Tennyson on the great skill he has shown in avoiding and keeping in subordination the supernatural, as unsuited to the present age! Under such circumstances it would be difficult to say what business the present age has with legends of chivalry at all; and it seems hardly needful to

¹ P. 249, pp. 170, 256. See also the names of the battles etc. (p. 162), which are all British, and taken from the old Welsh and English chronicles.

criticise a book which, professing to be a reproduction of the legends of the Round Table, makes scarcely a mention, and that quite incidentally, of the Sangreal.

The chiefest quality of the knightly ideal, and that which shines out of every page of its story, and that without which there can be no perfect knighthood, is religion. This is as necessary to the finished knight as his courage; and for want of this, Sir Launcelot, perfect in all earthly points, is brought to shame and to disgrace. The religion of the knight is that of the Son of God, Jesus Christ the man, our Lord. Throughout all Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, so far as I remember, the Virgin Mary is never mentioned once; everywhere the knight is sworn to the service of the Son of God—everywhere His example is set forth for him to follow. The knightly idea appropriated the worship of the Son of Man in its most perfect form: Jesus Christ was (in its creed) the most perfect knight, the noblest born and best-descended gentleman; to Him every true knight owed his service and his sword as to his suzerain, the head of the whole fellowship of Christian knighthood. It was His form that cheered him, as he rode at dead of night, over cold marshes, and through wild forests, the vessel out of which He ate His last passover he followed to the death, His relics he visited, the memorial of His cross he bore continually with him, in the very form of his sword. Is there then any wonder that the casual reader in the present day finds such an ideal rather hard to understand? Yet there is no mention, no shadow, of such an

influence or belief in Mr. Tennyson's poem from beginning to end.

There is indeed a modernness of thought and expression about the *Idylls*, which, to any one acquainted with the age they pretend to describe, is repulsive in the highest degree. Mr. Tennyson gained much, in his earlier poems on the subject, by describing the natural features of the country in which the story was laid; but in the *Idylls*, by describing just those features which strike the eye in the present day, to the exclusion of all others, he has lost very much more than he ever gained. The lavish use of modern colloquial phrases such as "*toppling over all antagonism*," "*as to abolish him*," "*the grace and versatility of the man*," and numbers more, help to aggravate you with a continual sense of anachronism. The character of the knights, especially of Launcelot, is precisely that of a modern highly-bred gentleman, with a dash of the Balaclava cavalry officer. Galahad is never mentioned. The impression of the country conveyed is that of modern England. The knights might be fox-hunters going to the meet.

I do not agree with the reviewers that the *Idylls* are an improvement on the old romances in a moral sense. I have no sympathy with that morbid refinement which is horrified at the mention of sin, to whose advocates many a noble part of the Old Testament must be a sealed book; but it seems to me that Mr. Tennyson has retained all that is evil and repulsive, and that presented to us in its most sickening and conventional form, and excluded rigorously

everything that belongs to the spiritual part and sacred meaning of the book. The Sancgreal, on which the whole story of the Round Table hangs, is entirely lost sight of. Sir Launcelot's sin brings him to no disgrace or suffering; if it is mentioned at all by the personages of the story, it is viewed precisely in the light in which very polite society in the present day would regard it: everything is made as pleasant to him as possible. But what does the romance say? Sir Launcelot is asleep by a chapel, where the Sancgreal appears to heal a wounded knight, but, owing to the weight of his earthly sin and fleshly passions, he has no power to rise against it, or even to awake out of his carnal sleep.

But I have marvel of this sleeping knight, that had no power to awake when this holy vessel was brought hither.—I dare right well say, said the squire, that he dwelleth in some deadly sin, whereof he was never confessed.—By my faith, said the knight, whatsoever he be, he is unhappy, for, as I deem, he is of the fellowship of the Round Table, the which is entered into the quest of the Sancgreal.

Then the knight takes Sir Launcelot's horse and his helm and his sword, the greatest disgrace that can befall a knight, and he has no power to prevent him.

Then anon Sir Launcelot waked . . . and he heard a voice that said, "Sir Launcelot, more harder than is the stone, and more bitter than is the wood, and more naked and bare than is the leaf of the fig-tree, wherefore go thou from hence, and withdraw thee from this holy place!" And when Sir Launcelot heard this he was passing heavy, and wist not what to do; and so he departed sore weeping, and cursed the time that he was born; for then he *deemed never to have worship more*, for the words went to his heart.¹

¹ The *Morte d'Arthur*, lib. xiii. cap. xviii. Caxton, Southey's Ed.

There can be no question but that the whole poem, and especially "Guinevere," is exceedingly beautiful; but it is essentially a modern beauty, without one touch of medieval feeling in it. The moral is modern in its tone, the teaching modern in its application. That teaching may be very noble and founded on the New Testament, the religious teaching of Chivalry may be equally noble, and equally founded on the New Testament, but they are not the same. They are different forms of the same teaching, suited to men under the most opposite conditions of human life. The wants and needs which called forth the chivalrous character are no longer felt, and the knightly idea is dead; the human wants that call forth modern action and civilisation are now urgent, but the time will come when they also shall pass away, and modern action and civilisation shall then die too; far above them both shines the eternal Christian idea which shall never die. If the present age cannot receive nor understand the chivalrous idea in its entirety, let it sleep in peace beneath its stately tomb, and do not trouble its repose by calling it up to an unnatural and spasmodic life. It had its work to do in its day, and did it; let us take care that we do ours too.

II

I HAD not intended troubling the Essay Meeting with any reply to the two papers on this subject which were read at our meeting in March; but, on reading them over again, I have thought

of two or three remarks which perhaps that much enduring body will pardon my making, as they may possibly remove what I think is a slight misconception of the nature of the question.

It is manifest that a work of fiction, more than any other kind of writing, requires some stable element in it to preserve it uninjured amidst the shocks of time. Not being materially true in its outward form, it must contain some supreme truth in it, which will make the moralist forget (or even approve) its material want of truth, in consideration of the value of the higher form of truth contained within it. When reading a story of any age, it makes very little difference whether the actual events (as they are described) ever happened or not, but it makes an immense difference whether the spirit in which such events are described as happening, and the outward form of life that that spirit took, ever were real things on the earth or not. As I said before, all the great works of fiction are written on this principle. The earliest ages of Greece are known at all to us only because a man (or men) happened to write a book in them, in which he described, and set down exactly, everything he saw about him, and the age is called Homeric ever since. It is not of the remotest consequence to us whether Troy was ever burnt or not, or whether Odysseus really "suffered many things also in his mind upon the sea"; but suppose that Homer, instead of describing an actual siege and an actual wanderer, had produced an ideal poem, partly out of his own head, partly from what he saw about him, and partly from old half-forgotten legends

of different periods taken altogether. Virgil is true to his own age.¹ Shakespeare is so perfectly true to the age he lived in, that he has sacrificed everything to this truth, and any attempt to reconcile his writings archæologically to any other age, in which the outward scene of his story may be laid, has always been in vain. And just as all the great works of fiction have been true to this law, so all that have failed in it have been forgotten. The French romances of the seventeenth century contained very noble and elevated thoughts and lessons, and no doubt "marvellously touched the springs of the mind and heart" of that day, but where are they now? Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas* is another such book. The good that is in them will not keep them alive; they are nothing but masks of good and bad qualities personified; they have no reality of human life in them, and no stability of human fact. Mr. Tennyson's *Idylls* are composed of three epochs: the British age, where the legends had their dim and vague origin; the mediæval age, the outward form of which even he has not taken uninjured; and the present age, from which he has received most of the feeling and spirit of his book. It is of no consequence whether a story is true with regard to the age the events are supposed to happen in, or to the writer's own age, but it is absolutely necessary that it should be true with regard to *some* age. If Mr. Tennyson had taken, as one of the essayists says he has, the mere "frame-

¹ As, for instance, in the description of Carthage (*Aeneid*, lib. i. 419), which evidently is drawn to the life.

work of the ancient legend"—a good king, an erring woman, a noble but imperfect friend—and had dressed it up "with all his wealth of thought and feeling," in accordance with the truth of any age that ever existed on the earth, he would have produced another of those great works which endure through time itself; as it is, in a work so incongruous, I cannot help seeing, in the midst of so much beauty, the elements of decay.

One of the essayists considers such legends as the Arthurian useful accessories to the study of history, and the knowledge of them indispensable in an inquiry into the unrecorded causes which lead to important events, and into the beliefs, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies of the popular mind, but that a *poet* is not bound to adhere to his original so closely as to retain such legends perfectly unaltered. As far as I can judge, the effect of this would be to prevent any person who took any interest in the study of history from caring for the poet at all. However beautiful might be the thoughts and descriptions contained in the book, no man who had approached the study of history with that reverence and devotion which its eternal meaning commands, could bear to have his associations and beliefs trifled with, and the laws of humanity ignored, to suit the taste of any age, however civilised and enlightened. One of the essayists says that "Ænone," "The Lotos-Eaters," and "Tithonus" are not in accordance with the last. I am perfectly at a loss for the grounds of such a judgment as this. It is hardly fair to take "The Lotos-Eaters," because it is no story at all, and, from its vagueness, does

not appear to be meant to represent any particular age or event. Mr. Tennyson probably had the narration of Odysseus in his mind, but he has departed from it in every way. His genius, however, is peculiarly classic, and no writer has reproduced more completely some of the gems of Hellenic song. His pastoral idylls are generally higher in tone than the originals (excepting perhaps such of them as Moschus' "Elegy on the Death of Bion"), but they approach very nearly to the religious hymns, chanted to particular divinities, especially those of the Homeric age. That exquisite idyll in *The Princess*, "Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height," may be taken as a perfect specimen of the highest Hellenic pastoral. Here are a few verses from a Homeric Hymn to Pan, translated word for word :

And hither and thither he goes through the dense thickets, allured sometimes by the gently flowing streams ; but again sometimes he passes over the mountains, traversed only by the sun, climbing the loftiest height that overlooks the flocks ; and oftentimes he runs along the long hoary mountain ranges, and oftentimes he passes over the spurs of the hills, slaying wild beasts, looking sharply about. And now and then at evening he plays alone, returning from the hunting, playing a sweet song on the music-reeds. Him not even the bird, which singing among the leaves of flowery spring, pours forth a sweet lay, would surpass in song. And with him then the sweet-songed mountain Nymphs, coming frequently on foot to the dark pebbled fountain, raise the song, and the echo sounds round the height of the mountains. And the god, going hither and thither in the midst of the dances, moves frequently with his feet. But on his back he wears the blood-stained skin of a leopard, delighting his mind with sweet songs in the soft meadow, where the crocus and frequent hyacinth, flourishing, are mingled with abundant grass.¹

¹ Homeric Hymn, xvii.

Who will say that Mr. Tennyson has not caught the spirit of this? And, with this before us, we shall not, I think, find anything in "C  none" at variance with the Homeric age. Indeed, the very form of expression is adhered to with wonderful exactness. "Many-rilled Ida" is the common epithet, not only in Homer, but in all the classic writings. The description of "evil-hearted Paris" is particularly exact :

a leopard's skin
Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Cluster'd about his temples like a god's.

Homer calls him "Alexander, in form like a god, having a leopard's skin on his shoulder."

"From many a vale
And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,
Or labour'd mine undrainable of ore.
Honour," she said, "and homage, tax and toll,
From many an inland town and haven large,
Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers."

Almost every word is a translation—"river-sunder'd champaign," "mast-throng'd," "shadowing citadel"; the actual word "glassy" is an anachronism, but the idea is not.

It is the same in "Tithonus." Here, as in Homer, we have that strange and yet so natural contradiction ; that love of, and dependence on, the earth, and yet that groaning at the sometimes intolerable burden of life to the earth-born ; that yearning after immortality, and yet that unappeasable longing for the rest and silence of the grave ; that strong feeling of human fellowship, and yet with it a lofty desire after the higher

communion of superior natures. In "Tithonus" indeed the poet has found a story which is alike in every age, and in preserving the emotions of the old Hellenic life he has but given a voice again to the troubled spirit of the whole race of the human-born. In the life of the son of Laomedon we see and acknowledge a common humanity, and the brightness of the dawn, that was so supreme in hope and loveliness to him, is the same to us; happier than Tithonus in this, that *our* hearts are no longer restless when they rest on Heaven.¹

¹ St. Augustine, *Conf.* lib. i. cap. 1 : "Quia facisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te."

THE "PARADISE LOST"

High are thy thoughts,
 but nourish them, and let them soar
 To what height sacred virtue and true worth
 Can raise them, though above example high.
Paradise Regained, Book I.

SOME years ago there were read in our Essay Meeting two essays upon Milton's great poem, which caused some excitement by the unusual opinions they advocated. These essays were the expression of feelings which all must acknowledge to be reverent and becoming, and very considerable ingenuity was displayed in pointing out the weak points of the book. Nevertheless it is evident that they were written, one of them more especially, as the writer of the present essay has the best possible reason for knowing, on a very superficial acquaintance with the poem itself, and the cognate circumstances with which its critic, at least, should certainly be somewhat familiar. These essays were answered by two others, but neither of these appear to contain a much deeper or clearer view of the subject, contenting themselves mainly with reproducing the obvious and oft-repeated eulogiums on the grandeur of the conception and of the diction of the poet. The present writer is far from supposing himself equal to a

more successful inquiry ; but the Essay Meeting being, we should imagine, above ten years older than it was at the period when this immature criticism on a great writer was ventured upon, it would seem not unsuitable for it to attempt a more exhaustive and unprejudiced expression of opinion, which it is merely the intention of this essay to invite.

We shall perhaps be thought to be even more precipitate than these rash and youthful essayists, when we say that the only way in which it seems possible to appreciate fully the *Paradise Lost* is to separate it entirely from the subject of which it avowedly treats ; the former essayists, as young people always do, thought almost entirely of the story or plot contained in the poem. Regarded solely in this light, it is, we think, almost impossible to speak of the poem otherwise than with blame. Although we may be willing to exonerate Milton, taking into consideration his peculiar training and the age in which he lived, of any irreverent intentions, it must, we think, be acknowledged that the subject of the poem, involving as it does the consideration of those questions before whose stupendous difficulty the human intellect, even when assisted by revelation, has ever quailed, and towards whose solution it has never been able to advance one step,—the origin of evil, free-will, the divine attributes of infinite power and mercy considered in connection with a creation full of misery,—is, to say the least of it, unsuitable, especially as these overwhelming themes are considered, not solemnly and soberly,

in the light of reason and of prayer, but poetically in that of dim traditions, and through an antique region of pagan and medieval mythos.

It is peculiarly characteristic of the age in which Milton lived, and the Puritan sects among whom he was brought up, and of those unprofitable and disturbing discussions on things beyond the reach of man's understanding which excited men's minds (and by the attempt to restrain which the Laudian party incurred such a load of obloquy), that Milton, a layman and political tract-writer, seems to feel no diffidence or hesitation in treating of these themes; but it would seem that it must be attributed to other influences than these that he does not shrink from describing the divine persons themselves in language and by ideas which, being human and sensuous, are naturally revolting and inadequate; and that a singular conjunction of classical poet and Puritan is no doubt the only one which could have produced a composition so extraordinary as the *Paradise Lost*.

We have said that we may be willing to acquit Milton of irreverence, and there is a view of this subject which probably is a true one, and which is not without its pathos. After a stormy and distracted life, a home rendered unhappy by a stern, unyielding temper and an intolerant creed, and a public life stained with violent party passions and degraded by the purchased pen of a political hireling, and by the malignity which pursued its enemies even beyond the grave,—this poor, blind, and old poet, scholar, and musician comes at last, his political dreams vanished, his

party destroyed, his power gone, to meditate on other things. Blind, despised, neglected, in those early dawns when he used to rise and walk in the garden, his fancy retraces the steps of man's wanderings through the antique paths of history and tradition, to that distant home and cradle under the eastern sky, towards which, as to our ancient country, mankind has ever looked and prayed. In the darkness in which he sat he sees before him the glades of Eden, and in the deep silence of the lull of politics, he listens for the speaking of a divine voice :

This subject for heroic song
 Pleased me, long choosing and beginning late,
 Not sedulous by nature to indite
 Wars, hitherto the only Argument
 Heroic deemed . . . the better fortitude
 Of patience and heroic martyrdom
 Unsung ; . . . me of these
 Not skilled nor studious, higher Argument
 Remains, sufficient of itself to raise
 That name, unless an age too late, or cold
 Climate, or years, damp my intended wing
 Depressed, and much they may. . . .

Before this gigantic intellect, this blind Samson, crushed and beaten down, before this solemn and religious nature, mistaken and erring perhaps, none of us surely will refuse to bow ; and the ties of party all forgotten, the noise and smoke of the battlefield passed away out of sight, the blood of the scaffold even forgiven, sit down together as children of the same Father, to whom the divine pleading comes equally, whom the taint and soil of sin alike deface, and to whom alike the antique stories of the old world (the expression of the

troubled heart of humanity) come like plaintive music, wandering down through the ages in search of holiness and of bliss.

We said that to appreciate the *Paradise Lost* we must forget the story and, in fact, read the whole book in such an allegorical light as will enable us to separate the beauties from the dross in which they are enclosed ; but this only means that we can only read parts of it at all, or at least with edification, for such parts as are purely narrative are so gross in their conceptions and so unworthy of the themes of which they treat, that no amount of allegorical interpretation can render them otherwise than disgusting. The principal of these are, the War in Heaven and, in a less degree, the description of the Creation. The first of these, slavishly copied from the classic fables, has this disadvantage as compared with them, that the wars of the material giants with the human gods of the Hellenic theogony had in them something of awe and mystery, being really what they professed to be—material agencies on a vast and awful scale ; nothing of which can be said of the conflict between the heavenly intelligences and the spiritual powers of darkness, the absurdity of the description of which culminates when it is explained that the ethereal angels, being coated with material armour, were more liable to the destructive force of Satan's engines than otherwise their spiritual bodies would have been. The description of the creation is scarcely less unpleasant (with the exception of those parts, of course, which are purely descriptive of nature), and it may be remarked respecting it,

and Milton's cosmogony in general, that his ideas were more gross and incorrect than the state of science in his day warranted; which probably arose from a strict adherence to a mistaken understanding of the Mosaic cosmogony. The description of Death and Sin, though also material, differs slightly from these, and is less objectionable, for this reason, that the intense horror and loathing of the description could not probably have been produced by a less material allegory. Some considerable part of the mutual converse of Adam and Raphael is also liable to become absurd from the same reasons; and indeed we shall probably derive most pleasure by allegorising the whole book, and taking Adam as simply the mouthpiece of humanity, and the whole wealth of description of the scenery by which he is surrounded as imagery of the different aspects in which the visible things of earth and heaven appear to and affect us.

But when we have thus cleared the ground,—when we have thus performed the thankless task of fault-finding, and may now open our eyes on the beauties of the scene,—what a glorious landscape of loveliness lies before us! What a pageant of sublime thoughts and aspirations fills the sight! With a sweetness and a rhythm and a choice of words which even Tennyson himself, following carefully and closely, and with the further aid of two centuries of literature, has scarcely surpassed, never surely were the beauties of this world—

To our native Heaven

Little inferior—

sung with a nobler voice.

As when
 Cherubic songs by night from neighbouring hills
 Aerial music send.

As when a scout
 Through dark and desert ways with peril gone
 All night ; at last by break of cheerful dawne
 Obtains the brow of some high-climbing Hill,
 Which to his eye discovers unaware
 The goodly prospect of some foreign land
 First seen ; or some renowned Metropolis
 With glistening Spires and Pinnacles adorned
 Which now the rising sun gilds with his beams.

As one who long in populous city pent,
 Where houses thick and sewers annoy the aire,
 Forth issuing on a summer's morn to breathe
 Among the pleasant villages and Farms
 Adjoyn'd, from each thing met conceives delight,
 The smell of grain, of tedded grass, or Kine,
 Or dāiry, each rural sight, each rural sound.

. . . a field
 Part arable and tilth whereon were sheaves,
 New-reaped, the other part sheep-walks and foulds . . .

Or where—

A steep wilderness, whose hairie sides
 With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,
 Access deny'd ; and overhead upgrew
 Insuperable heighth of loftiest shade,
 Cedar, and Pine, and Fir, and branching Palm,
 A Silvan Scene, and as the ranks ascend,
 Shade above shade, a woody theatre
 Of stateliest view. . . .
 On which the Sun more glad impressed his beams
 Than in fair evening Cloud, or humid Bow,
 When God hath showered the earth ; so lovely seemed
 That Landskip. And of pure now purer air
 Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires
 Vernal delight and joy.

Between them Lawns, or level Downs, and Flocks
 Grazing the tender herb, were interposed,

Or palmie hillock, or the flourie lap
 Of some irriguous valley spread her store,
 Flowers of all hue, and without Thorn the Rose.
 Another side, umbrageous Grots and Caves
 Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
 Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps
 Luxuriant ; meanwhile murmuring waters fall
 Down the slope hills dispersed, or in a Lake
 That to the fringed Bank with Myrtle crowned
 Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.
 The Birds their quire apply ; aires, vernal aires,
 Breathing the smell of Field and Grove, attune
 The trembling leaves . . .

Not that fair field
 Of Enna, where Proserpinë, gathering flowers,
 Herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis
 Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain
 To seek her through the world ; nor that sweet Grove
 Of Daphne, by Orontes and the inspired
 Castalian spring, might with this Paradise
 Of Eden strive.

Over all which loveliness, as over the human
 mind, pass shade and sorrow, making life more
 touching and lovely by the temporary eclipse :

As when from mountain tops the dusky clouds
 Ascending, while the North wind sleeps, o'erspread
 Heaven's chearful face, the lowering Element
 Scowls o'er the dark'nd landskip, snow or showers ;
 If chance the radiant Sun, with farewell sweet
 Extend his evening beam, the fields revive,
 The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
 Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.

Or when at last, haply, desolation comes, as
 come it will too surely :

Their glory withered, as when Heaven's fire
 Hath scath'd the forest Oaks, or mountain Pines ;
 With singéd top their stately growth, though bare,
 Stands on the blasted heath, . . .

Well might the Angelic virtue answer mild :

Adam, I therefore came, nor art thou such
Created, or such place hast here to dwell,
As may not oft invite though spirits of Heaven
To visit thee.

Nor amid this loveliness is there wanting an earthly and historic interest,—all the treasures of medieval lore and art ; all that the seventeenth century knew and dreamed of—a century full of knowledge and of dreams :

The Empiric Alchemist by fire of sooty coal
Can turn, or holds it possible to turn
Metals of drossiest ore to perfect gold,
As from the mine.

Their quaint opinions wide,
 Hereafter, when they come to model Heav'n
 And calculate the Stars, how they will wield
 The mighty frame, how build, unbuild, contrive
 To save appearances, how gird the sphear
 With Centric and Eccentric scribbled o'er,
 Cycle and epicycle, orb in orb.

As when by night the glass
Of Galileo, less assured, observes
Imagined lands and regions in the moon.

All the curious speculations of which that age was so fond :

The common gloss of theologians.

And the jargon of the chymists :

Concoctive heat
To transubstantiate, and what redounds transpire
Thro' spirits with ease.

And the description of the sun :

Metal or Stone

Not all parts like, but all alike inform'd
With radiant Light, as glowing iron with fire.

If metal, part seemed Gold, part Silver clear;
 If stone, Carbuncle most or Chrysolite,
 . . . and a stone besides
 Imagined rather oft, than elsewhere seen.
 That stone, or like to that which, here below,
 Philosophers in vain so long have sought,
 In vain, though by their powerful Art they bind
 Volatil Hermes, and call up unbound
 In various shapes old Proteus from the sea,
 Drained through a Limbec to his native form.

All the political and religious sarcasm and
 ridicule of the day :

Embryos and Idiots, Eremites and Friars
 White, Black and Grey, with all their trumpery,
 And they who to be sure of Paradise,
 Dying, put on the weeds of Dominic,
 Or in Franciscan, think to pass disguised.
 . . . The tedious pomp that waits
 On Princes, when their rich retinue long
 Of horses led, and grooms besmear'd with gold
 Dazzles the crowd, and sets them all agape.

Races and games
 Of tilting Furniture and emblazoned Shields,
 Impresses quaint, caparisons and Steeds,
 Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous Knights
 At Joust and Tournament, then marshall'd Feast
 Served up in hall with sewers and Seneschals.

The unsurpassed music of the seventeenth
 century is not unheard :

The Harp
 Had work and rested not, the solemn Pipe
 And Dulcimer, all organs of sweet stop,
 All sounds on Fret by String or golden Wire
 Tempered, soft tunings, intermixed with voice
 Choral or unison : of incense clouds
 Fuming from golden censers hid the mount.

And, finally, human pathos, to which we pass
 naturally from the cathedral strains :

Forsake me not thus, Adam ! Witness Heaven,
 What love sincere, and reverence in my heart
 I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,
 Unhappily deceiv'd ; thy suppliant,
 I beg, and clasp thy knees ; bereave me not,
 Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,
 Thy counsel in this uttermost distress.
 My only strength and stay : forlorn of thee,
 Whither shall I betake me, where subsist ?
 While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,
 Between us two let there be peace.

Nor is this lovely country inhabited only by
 beings earthly-minded. The book, like Pros-
 pero's island, "is full of voices," "celestial voices,"
 "millions of spiritual creatures." Thoughts,
 intelligences, throng its pages :

Angels ascending and descending, bands
 Of guardians bright, as when to him who fled
 To Padan-Aram in the field of Luz ;
 Dreaming by night under the open air,
 And waking cried, This is the gate of heaven !

So that the eye is not more delighted with

Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
 Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
 Or flocks or herds, or coming on
 Of grateful evening mild,

and all the lovely imagery of the book, than is
 "the mind, through all her powers irradiated,"
 and what is dark illumined, and what is low
 raised and supported :

When God or Angel guest familiar use
 To sit indulgent, and with him partake
 Rural repast, permitting him the while
 Venial discourse unblamed ;

till, "raised to the height of this great argument,"

we seem to hear with the poet the echoes and to breathe the clear air of the eternal hills :

Smit with the love of sacred song.

To which frame of mind what can come more fitly than these lines, surely as sublime as any which the Divine prompting ever inspired poet to indite :

This most afflicts me, that departing hence
As from His face I shall be hid, deprived
His blessed count'nance ; here I could frequent
With worship, place by place, where He vouchsafed
Presence Divine, and to my sons relate,
On this Mount He appeared, under this tree
Stood visible, among these Pines His voice
I heard, here with Him at this fountain talked.
So many grateful Altars I would rear
Of grassie Turf, and pile up every Stone
Of lustre from the brook, in memory,
Or monument to Ages, and thereon
Offer sweet-smelling Gums, and Fruits, and Flowers.
In yonder nether World where shall I seek
His bright appearances, or footsteps trace ?
For though I fled Him angry, yet recall'd
To life prolonged, and promised Race I now
Gladly behold, though but His utmost skirts
Of glory, and far off His steps adore.

To whom thus Michael, with regard benign :—
Adam, thou knowest Heaven His, and all the Earth,
Not this rock only ; His Omnipresence fills
Land, sea, and air, and every kind that lives,
Fomented by His virtual power, and warmed.
All th' earth He gave thee to possess and rule,
No despicable gift, surmise not then
His presence to these narrow bounds confine
Of Paradise or Eden . . .

And—

Doubt not, but in valley and in plain
God is as here, and will be found alike

Present, and of His presence many a sign
Still following thee, still compassing thee round
With goodness and Paternal Love, His face
Express, and of His steps the tract Divine.

. . . Good with bad

Expect to hear, supernal Grace contending
With sinfulness of Men, thereby to learn
True patience, and to temper joy with fear
And pious sorrow, equally enur'd
By moderation either state to bear,
Prosperous or adverse ; so shalt thou lead
Safest thy life, and best prepared endure
Thy mortal passage, when it comes.

LITERATURE

HAVING had the other evening to attend, from a sense of duty, a meeting which was held in the Old Lecture Theatre in Cannon Street, and the meeting being of the usual heavy and oppressive nature, and moreover being addressed by sundry "intelligent mechanics"—thereby impressing you with a healthy horror of democratic parliaments—I occupied myself during most of the time in following the train of thought suggested by the room itself. There is perhaps no place in Birmingham which should inspire such feelings of respect. I am not aware of the exact date of its erection, or whether the earliest followers of Science and Literature met within its walls—the Priestleys, the Daltons, the Huttons, the Schimmelpennincks, and the Galtons; but whether this was the case or not, it was the society founded and encouraged by them who did so, and who kept alive for many years in Birmingham whatever was calculated to wean the mind from vulgarity and sordid pursuits. But to my own mind this room has an interest still more particular and attractive. I will not say that it was here that I first contracted a fondness for reading, but it certainly was here—and I can recall

the very evening—that I first saw something of the delightful possibilities of “Literature” properly so-called. Very few in this room perhaps will remember the course of lectures on History, or the Philosophy of History, delivered some twelve or fourteen years ago by a gentleman of the name of Lord, but if there are any, they will thank me for recalling to their minds a very pleasant remembrance. I have no recollection who he was, nor where he came from, but his lectures impressed those who heard him, many of whom were then very young, in a remarkable way. Following the pleasing thoughts which the remembrance of these bygone years suggested, I naturally connected them with the past of our Essay Meeting, associated with such thoughts in the minds of all of us; and the urgent necessity of producing a paper at this meeting, combined with a sincere wish to contribute, in however slight a degree, to the prosperity of its future, is the occasion of the present essay.

Literary societies like ours, which combine the social with the intellectual element, are exposed to peculiar dangers and causes of decay. The intellectual element in them is narrowed to one phase, and that a somewhat peculiar one—pure literature. Societies formed for some express study or the attainment of some particular art, as geology, natural history, bibliography, music, painting, etc., being simple in their object, live or die with that object alone. So long as any meet for the pursuit of that object, their end is obtained; if none meet, the society is at an end, and no more is to be said about it. Besides, their object is a

tangible one, and no one who is not interested in that object is attracted to the society. With us it is very different. The social pleasures of our society afford attractions when the intellectual have been forgotten or overlooked ; technical (or, as I have ventured to call them, tangible) subjects are unsuited to our meetings ; and that which is suited—pure literature, which is what all our essays aim at—is of all kinds of writing the most rare in any degree above mediocrity. I have always asserted that to compose an essay at once first-class and still exactly suited to the idea of the Essay Meeting is the most difficult of attainments.

In the abstract, like most abstractions, Literature is not easy of definition—of one, at any rate, which will distinguish it from mere style ; for every conceivable subject of literature may be classed under some science or other, and if you exclude all these, you leave her nothing but a mere arrangement of words. I was inclined to define it as all writing which appeals to the heart and not to the head, but such a definition would be one-sided and derogatory to literature ; and though I might call it Science displayed attractively, which I believe to be very nearly an exact definition, the word “attractively” is liable to be misunderstood. Perhaps the exactest definition of all would be, that science which treats of the effect of the contact of human nature with matter, for all literature is instinctively human, and every one will agree that no writing was ever called, or thought of, as literature, which has not individual human feelings as its centre. But, on the whole, I prefer, as most simple, the former definition, viz.

Science, by which I mean every conceivable subject of interest to mankind, written attractively. And here we see at once why excellence in literature is so rare, and why, to speak colloquially, our Essay Meetings "come to grief," for to write or speak attractively is the rarest and most precious gift of a beneficent God.

Whether this is true of literature or not, it is certain that it is true as a definition of what is required of our essays; for it is laid upon us, as a necessity of our existence, that we must be attractive, and woe be to us if we fail! What a terrible burden, then, is this, especially if we consider the variety of taste! What are we to do to become attractive to a room full of people, many of whom avowedly attend the Essay Meeting chiefly for its social element? I can think of but one way of getting anything like an answer to this question. I will state my view of what is attractive in literature, and the Essay Meeting will be good enough to declare whether it is of the same opinion or not; we shall then at least have some standard to set before us, some mark to aim at, and some example to follow. But at the outset it is necessary to discriminate. Mankind is divided into two distinct classes, Personalists and Impersonalists (something in the way of abstract and concrete). The Personalists take little interest in anything which does not relate in some plain way to individual human life, and to the senses and emotions which make up that life. The Impersonalists, on the other hand, delight in nothing but the consideration of abstract phenomena (if the phrase may be allowed), which have

no connection, or at least a very remote one, with human life. I give these people up : nothing that I can say can ever possibly be attractive to them ; and if there are any such in the room they are requested not to vote.

If we agree in the attraction to a personal interest, our idea of attractiveness in a writer will probably be something like this, that it is his duty, in what he writes, to aim at setting his subject vividly before the reader, in such a way as to awaken his interest in it as a thinking human being in whose common nature author, subject, and reader are united, the first and last absolutely, and the second either absolutely or relatively, as the case may be. To do this the writer must know an immense deal more than he absolutely writes : he must not only have mastered the subject on which he writes, but he must have mastered every other subject which in the remotest way relates to or has any influence upon it—mastered it, that is, as far as it is necessary to understand its influence on his own more particular subject. By all this knowledge he forms in his own mind a perfect image of the subject he wishes to describe ; so that, out of the fulness and completeness of his conception of it, he conveys to the reader, if not as complete a conception as he has himself, still as complete a one as the nature of the case renders possible or necessary. If, for instance, he is writing history, every other science—philosophy, topography, biography, natural history—all throw their particular light, all bring their especial assistance to the subject, and it is only rearranging the order

of the sciences, and you may go through the whole list, with as many different changes as there are worlds. Unless the historian does this, he produces indeed a number of phantoms gliding dimly about, but he inspires no interest in the breast of his reader in the story he relates ; unless a writer on natural history does this, he becomes a mere compiler of catalogues, and by his intolerable weariness disgusts his reader with the science he wishes him to study ; unless a writer on philosophy does this, he becomes a mere theorist, and the influence his book would otherwise exert is lost as soon as it is read ; unless a preacher does this, as he very seldom does, the Divine Story which he tries to tell is listened to but as an idle tale worthily forgotten as soon as heard. This is why novels and tales are so attractive and so much read, because, whatever else they may do, they fulfil from their very nature this requirement, which, in every other branch of bookcraft, the deepest study can scarcely accomplish. They go straight to the heart of the reader ; they appeal to that common instinct which he possesses as one of a united family, in which "one touch of Nature has made the whole world kin." If they do not do this, they are worthless and are never read ; but being by their very nature simply relations of the experiences and sorrows of our fellow human beings, they can scarcely, except from the grossest stupidity, fail of touching some recollection, or some affection, or some sorrow, which the influence of Time and of the nobler feelings has made dearer to the heart than life itself. But you will ask, How is this art to be obtained ? First,

I suppose, by the possession of some native aptitude ; but chiefly, I am certain, by the hardest and most patient labour—a labour which despises nothing, which is daunted by nothing, which a love of the pursuit it is engaged in carries over every obstacle and through every discouragement ; a patience which is untired by the drudgery of working through uncongenial and seemingly irrelevant sciences for the sake of the light which here and there they shed on the subject on which you are engaged ; a patience which carries you through that laborious formation of style, that profuse blotting, that writing and rewriting, without which no author can expect to obtain that mastery over his language which alone will render his style attractive. How is it possible, then, that a society like ours, composed of members whose lives are given to pursuits the reverse of all this, can ever accomplish such labours—ever accomplish, that is, what it was avowedly established to perform ? And does it not seem more than probable that a society formed for such lofty aims must be content to go on in future, as it has gone on for a considerable part of its existence, drinking tea, and eating “trifle” and bread and butter ? Or shall we at last be constrained to think as the Roman satirist thought—

Ludisti satis, edisti satis, atque bibisti ;
Tempus abire tibi est !

Of course, it will be said that much can be done without attaining to such altitudes as these, but without some such standard as this before us *nothing* will be done. There was a sentence we

learnt at school, of which (as an erudite school-fellow used to say) "I forget the Latin," but which was to the effect that there is no fruit without labour; and how can there be labour without some stimulus, and how can there be a stimulus without some noble and attractive goal—very far off, alas, but to some natures not the less of a stimulus for that? And, moreover, let us never forget that not one particle of all this effort is thrown away. We have said that all the sciences blend with and assist each other, and it is the greatest proof of the truth of our theory that all these sciences and all these pursuits blend into one common sense, one master principle, which at once assists and is assisted by them. It is the great fault of pure reason, and of its modern followers, that they pursue but one object, blinding themselves to every other (so that in these enlightened days it is no absurdity to describe a man whose sole objects of belief are two or three flint axes dug up some dozen feet below the drift); whereas all that makes a man combine in his mind more ideas than one, more sciences than one, more conceptions of the appearances of things than one, elevates him in the scale of existence, carries him nearer to his Creator, and disposes him to listen to that system, catholic over nature as over the human race, which has for its centre the All-creating Word; for the more we realise, by every branch of learning, and by every effort of our intellect, the external appearance of the Life of Christ, the more we picture to ourselves, by the aid of natural history, of topography, or of archæology, the progress of

that life, so much the more we shall discover the master principle, the *summum bonum*, of the ancients, in which all wisdom is contained. Across the long and dreary ages of strife and sin and doubt, the echoes of this life come to us with the sweetness of some half-caught melody from another world; "a dew, like that of Hermon, preventing drought and barrenness from entirely invading the field of God"; from the lake shores of Galilee, with the waves rippling on their flower-enamelled banks; from that pastoral life of peace and of a purity which we can never understand, in one unbroken path of beneficence (thanks to which the dullest existence has ever after had its glimpse of heaven); through the crowds of city and religious life; in contact with every grade of human society, from the centurion in his gorgeous Roman uniform to the outcast publican; through the judgment hall of Pilate to the felon's cross and the heretic's grave. And the more our learning enables us to see all the various points of view, and all the lights and shadows of this picture of Our Lord, and to appreciate its relative position in the history of our race, the more we shall feel that we have not lost our labour, if it has enabled us to realise, more fully perhaps than we otherwise should, the highest possibilities of that human nature which it is our overwhelming responsibility to share with Him.

ON TRUE AND FALSE SUPER- NATURALISM

It would be an interesting inquiry for any one familiar with the homely traditions of different ages, and imbued with the love of old books, to trace the dissimilarity between the true superstition—the true supernatural creed, which is the immemorial possession and belief of a people, which has its birth in their everyday thoughts and necessities, and the aspect and influence of nature around them—and that false supernaturalism, generally the offspring of an affected and superficial learning and civilisation, which seeks to graft and transplant some incongruous and strange conception upon the natural belief of a people, thereby producing no better result than a worthless and trivial tale.

Those real traditions and superstitions which come to us fresh and pure from the hills and dales and country-places where they had their birth, however false we may choose to call the narrations they convey, are indeed the truest part of history. Prejudice may misrepresent, and slander and faction may malign, and the distance of time may obscure, the deeds and thoughts of nations and of men, but the spectral tales of the

people carry us at once into the most retired dwellings and the most distant past, and show us, with a reality which prevents a doubt, the actions and the thoughts, the lives and deaths, the hopes and fears, of nations known to us otherwise but by name.

The awful certainty of and familiarity with death, which is the common property of the whole human race, gives these legends a solemnity and a gravity which we wrong very much when we consider them in any but the most serious mood; and we may take it as a sign of right feeling on these points when we are shocked at those monstrous tales which heap wonder and horror on each other with no regard to that truth which nowhere more than in those legends should be scrupulously observed.

This familiarity with death and the spirit-world, while it is the awful possession of the human race, is also one of its highest privileges. In whatever country man may be placed, this familiarity gives an interest and a beauty to his life which its otherwise monstrous dulness would fail to possess, and a grandeur and nobility to the voice of Nature other than her most lovely or most awful scenes would, without this, be able to command. It is this that gives its lesson to the rolling ocean, their moral to the everlasting hills. It was this that gave a meaning, in the eyes of the dwellers among them, to the dismal and gloomy recesses of the Harz Mountains, to the dim and sacred forests of Germany, and to the dreary wilds of Scandinavia; and having once given this meaning to Nature, this spectral creed

receives back from her a strength and an endurance which is among the most wonderful things in this world of wonders. The possessors of the second sight¹ in the Highlands of Scotland were no longer seers when they left their native hills, and the gnomes and dwarfs of the Norse mythology did not accompany their human acquaintances in their wanderings, but remained in their old haunts.

It would be curious to trace the various causes which led to the different kinds of supernaturalism to which countries and ages have given birth : as, for instance, in the rough first ages of Northern Europe, the necessity and utility of workers in iron, and of strong and swift horses, was the origin of numberless legends of wayland smiths, and of famous steeds, gifted with human sense and speech. Again, the stories of the fairies are among those which have suffered most from a spurious supernaturalism, but they seem to have been confined entirely to Great Britain. The elves of the popular tales of Ireland would appear, indeed, to be the same as the alfs of Iceland and Scandinavia, but the real fairies of England and Scotland are totally different from the trolls, kobolds, and little men of the mines of Germany and the north of Europe. It is interesting to see how the mineral treasures of these latter countries and the immemorial skill of the inhabitants in working them have influenced the mythology ; the dwarfs, who play so chief a part in their tales, have but a very faint echo in the miner superstitions of our own country. Scotland also, the

¹ See the letters on Second Sight in the Pepys Correspondence.

home of so many supernatural beings, is entirely ignorant of them. Were these German and Scandinavian traditions dim recollections, as some have supposed, of a previous people, whom our Teuton ancestors conquered and destroyed, or was there so great a difference between the Keltic and Scandinavian mind, so great a diversity in their several readings of the great lessons of humanity and of the voice of the visible world, that they could not "carve out of Nature for themselves" the same legends or the same creed?

Why, again, was magic and the power of invoking the dead so much more general in the southern and north-eastern countries of Europe than elsewhere? Innumerable traditions, indeed, have spread over the whole of Europe, but with such remarkable exceptions as to increase rather than lessen our wonder. Why, for instance, was the spectre huntsman, so often seen in Germany, England, and even France, entirely unknown, so far as I am aware, in Spain or Italy, in Scandinavia or Scotland? Some legends found alike in the Hindoo, the Classic, and the Teutonic nations are invaluable to the ethnologist as bearing on the common origin of the Indo-European races, but even these are full of strange variations.

It would also be very curious to observe the changing of these traditions with the age. There is one very remarkable instance which is well worthy of being traced to its source. Before the Reformation in England we hear very little of apparitions of the dead,—what we do hear being mere monkish narrations, for the glory of their

different orders, of the appearance of saints and great ecclesiastical dignitaries,—nothing at all that corresponds with the familiar intercourse with the spirits of departed friends found in the more modern ghost stories. Instead of this, the belief in fairies was universal. These pretty beings were everywhere, haunting every dell and lonely place. After the Reformation it was observed by several writers that the fairies entirely disappeared. Then, when the mind of the people was loosened from its old sure anchorage in the religion of Rome, and tossed and confused with religious conflict and doubt, graver and more solemn thoughts brought nearer to them the spirit-world, in more noble but more awful guise. Then, not in lonely and romantic spots, fit for fanciful imaginations, did a beautiful and fairy creation dance before them, as in a poet's dream, but the spirits of their dead friends stood before them in familiar orchards and rooms. Riding in open day, on their homely business, near their own houses, they held talk face to face with spirits. In those great struggles of the serious and pious mind of the Protestant Teuton after the everlasting truth, the departed spirits of men manifested an interest in the trouble of their human kin; and so closely were these ghostly interviews connected with the truths of religion, that for many years to doubt one was to doubt the other, and the man who denied the possibility of an apparition declared himself an infidel.

I have space but for one instance of the false supernaturalism. What nations and generations have firmly believed in is as true to us as any

history can be ; for, as a naturalist can describe an animal from seeing its food, so the intellectual food of a people shows us the people itself. If this is the value of these legends, how utterly worthless must those fanciful narrations of supernatural events be which never were the faith of any nation, or anything else but the imaginative ravings of a poet's brain !

We see this in the half-Classic, half-Gothic poems of Tasso and Ariosto. Of Tasso's beautiful poem no one should speak but with the greatest respect, but to my mind it is greatly injured by those human trees that bleed and human woods that speak. But Tasso is innocent of this charge compared with Ariosto. In his poem we find little else but this false supernaturalism. Here we see hippogryphs, dragons, visits to the moon and planets, heroes slaying whole armies in one day with a single sword—an innumerable crowd of such follies, which the real beauties of the poem hardly counterbalance.

Fairy tales and supernatural tales generally, which have been made in modern times to serve as vehicles for modern teaching, have been productive of the greatest harm in this respect. The well-meaning but mistaken authors never saw that, by thus falsifying and slandering some of the most serious and solemn instincts of our nature, they were committing a far greater moral wrong than their teaching would ever remove. No good can ever come out of falsehood, and that is most false which is monstrous and unnatural.

Such writers never saw or understood the real

lessons and teaching of these time-honoured traditions which they irreverently parodied—lessons not a few, and very high and noble, the greatest of which perhaps is this : that by reflecting on this universal desire of the human soul, this craving which it has ever shown after some knowledge of, and intercourse with, the spirit-world—to make for itself, as it were, friends of the dwellers in that world, that when, after death, it enters, naked and homeless, into that unknown land, astonished and dismayed, they may receive it into everlasting habitations—this yearning after some being gifted with sympathies at once human and divine—a native at once of the mortal and immortal worlds, a god and yet a man—we may perhaps see something of the scope and object of the mission of One who, Himself possessing all these qualities, has gathered together all the craving of the whole human race, all the follies and sins and desires of humanity, into Himself, and by condescending to them, elevated into virtue all its erring and senseless and blind instincts, all its dulness and groping in the dark—Jesus Christ, the Man.

THE AUTUMN WALK

A solemn peace of its own.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON, in one of the most stately of those *Ramblers*, whose "stately wisdom" is like the playing of solemn and grand music, has written the following passage, speaking of the propriety of keeping death before our eyes. "If this same thought was always predominant," he says, "we should then find the absurdity of stretching out our arms incessantly to grasp that which we cannot keep, and wearing out our lives in endeavours to add new turrets to the fabric of ambition, when the foundation itself is shaken, and the ground on which it stands is mouldering away." At first sight it would seem easy and most natural that, standing in the midst of death every moment of our lives, we should think the subject of our own approaching dissolution a theme of such importance that we should rarely need the Doctor's euphonious persuasions. But so strangely and wonderfully do we fail in realising the awful importance of this last moment, that we not only utterly ignore as many as we please of the considerations which would tend to convince us of its importance, but we turn the rest

into sources of pleasure through our earthly imaginations, and suffer a pleasing, sentimental melancholy to prevail upon us, when we ought to be roused by the blast of a trumpet, second in power only to that which shall blow at the last day.

There is a season of the year of which the poetic nature delights to think, when the voices of the trees are hushed before their approaching desolation, and the water in the pools is yellow with the shadow of the faded leaves,—when the wind plays low and mournful music, and the storm demon is preparing to let loose his blasts upon the earth. Then there is a hush and silence over all nature, as around the deathbed of a dying hero, when all men are thinking of his departed glory and past life, and are bowing their heads in silence before the coming blow. The mind receives from the face of the country at this season a portion of its calm ; and by the contemplation of the fate of nature, we are soothed into a fond resignation to our own.

It was on an afternoon in autumn that I left the cheerful glow of the fire in the parlour of a country-house, and, in the company of a lady, took a walk in the fields. The day was cloudy, and a heavy, dull feeling pervaded the air. The country around us was flat and moderately wooded, and when, after passing two or three fields, we turned to look at the red-brick house we had left, surrounded by its trees, the prospect reminded us of one of the engravings of the last century, in which the chief characteristic is the absence of sunlight. The harvest had been mostly gathered,

and the bright yellow of the stubble fields, and of many of the trees, contrasted finely with the cloudy sky and the dull brown of the grass. Our path led through several fields to a pool of water hidden from the sight by thick trees. We did not say much. What had we to tell? At these times each one sees for himself a different scene to his companion. It was the remark of a subtle thinker, that since the remembrance of each person gives to a place a look and meaning which he only can perceive, there must be an unknown number of pleasing, sad, or dreadful associations spread over the scenes inhabited or visited by man.

These fields, the old house behind us, this moaning wind, that dark water hidden by the trees, which we contemplate with a pensive pleasure, may excite in another unutterable ideas of grief or agony. Who knows with what strange and fearful beings this scene might be peopled for him, as we ourselves have known in other places! Nor is such a fancy unsuitable to an autumn walk. May not this feeling, these associated ideas, known only to ourselves, have been in time formed into the wild legends of earthly spirits, gnomes, and fairies of this and other lands; and what are more autumnal in their associations, and the frame of mind which they create, than such legends? In days like this, full of dark shadows and dim, soft lights, with a sensation of fulness and ripeness and approaching decay in the air, we understand and realise these stories—the birthright and heirloom of a northern race. Autumn is the epic of the deep-thinking

northern nations, as summer is the voluptuous love-song of the south. These yellow woods and brown fields are not the dwelling-places of nymphs and satyrs, but the home of the spirits of our fatherland (to many of us, at least). The German dwarfs, elves, giants, little men of the mines, kobolds, and nixies—these, which surpass in number even the legends of the ideal Greek, are even perhaps more lovely than his,—witness the beautiful myth of the “silent people.” They are, like the autumn, domestic, familiar, homely in their tone and character; in all of them the human interest is predominant, the supernatural is but accessory. The heroes are peasants, poor children, herdsmen; they are honest, simple, manly, and yet child-hearted; they are generally oppressed and looked down upon by their fellow human beings, and sit hopelessly in the chimney-corner, or wander mournfully in the fields, like those deprived of mortal friends. Such, these worldly spirits love; they appear to have adopted and to believe in the old German proverb, “A heart worthy of scarlet lies often under a coarse woollen cloak.” Acting upon this principle, they assist and help these forsaken ones, and lavish upon them and their families prosperity and blessings. All this is so natural and homely, so mixed up with the daily life of a people, that these legends suit the autumn days better than the most gorgeous classic dreams. More—with this autumn feeling upon us I think we can understand what they are. They are an attempt to find language for nameless sights and voices. They are the translation of the murmuring song of the ocean, of the fitful

strains that the wind is playing in wild music ;
they are the description

Of undescribed sounds
That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors !

These fearful lines, for instance, come nearer to the sound of the wind at this moment over the tops of the fir-trees than anything else :

From the deep mine rush wildly out
The troop of gnomes, in hellish rout,
Forth to the witches-clubs they fly ;
The griffins watch as they go by ;
The horn of Satan grimly sounds,
On Blocksburg's flanks strange din resounds,
And spectres crowd its summit high.

The idea of the griffins watching the gnomes as they fly past, and the spectres crowding the top of the high mountain, is particularly fine.

The class of spirits called trolls (which may be either dwarfs or giants) are mostly wicked and malignant ; the kobolds or hobgoblins are neither good nor bad, but are boisterous, terrifying, and noisy ; but the nissies or nixies are of a thoroughly and decidedly good disposition, as their names indicate. Some of them have been known to fill the office of treasurer or master-builder in churches or cathedrals, greatly to the edification of the people and the assistance of the workmen.

There is something at all times peculiarly fascinating and mysterious in a deep pool of water, but at no season more so than in autumn. A short walk on the day I am writing about brought us to the brink of a large pond, partly overgrown with rushes, and surrounded with high

trees on a sloping bank. The colour of the water was various—in some places yellow with the reflection of the faded leaves; in others dark and gloomy, reflecting the cloudy sky; and where the brown grassy bank shaded it, it was black. Here and there, through the trunks of the trees all round, we could see the bright yellow of the stubble fields shining amidst the prevailing brown. The water was strewn round the edges with fallen leaves, the wind was rustling through the sedges and moaning through the trees, but there was still a great silence and solemnity about, which we find at no other time.

If I had the power of those old legend-makers, what wild stories would I translate for you from what the wind is saying! This dark water itself speaks a language too—very suggestively, if I could translate it—touching some fearful tale. Consider—a dark water, evening, the wind wailing among trees—thus much is Nature's language—how easy to find it a voice and a meaning in our own. There is a scene like this in a German story of a giant. These giants—a good-natured, honest, truth-loving race—were being continually taken in and cheated by men. This particular one was deceived by a boy, who was very weak, but very cunning. By many tricks he made the giant believe he was very strong, and lived with him to serve him. One day he was sent out with the giant's child. On their way they passed by a large pool. The water was very dark and deep. The child fell in and was drowned. Then the boy told the giant that his child had left him and gone into the forest, thinking to meet its father.

Upon this, the giant and the boy set out through the forest seeking it. When they came to the edge of the wood next the boy's home, he asked leave to go to see his mother, promising to return and renew the search the next day. The giant gave him leave; and mindful of his word, and as a reward for (as he supposed) the boy's faithful services, he gave him three bushels of gold, with which he returned to his mother, and, never returning, nor ever haunted by his cruel deceit and broken word, lived all his life rich and fortunate; but (these are the touching words with which the legend ends) "the giant wandered about in the forest, seeking for his child." Excepting poor blind Polyphemus (also a giant), in love with the sea-nymphs, I know nothing so pathetically touching as this—the strong, true-hearted, and deceived giant wandering about the dark, dreary forest, seeking for his lost child!

Many more such legends are there, and many more too could we learn, if we listened reverently to the teaching of Nature. But the evening comes on silently, and the darkness gathers about us. Gradually the tops of the trees grow fainter and less distinct against the sky; gradually the dark shadows spread out on the water from the banks and meet in the centre; the wind ceases, moaning only at intervals very low: you can hear the falling leaves dropping on the grass. Through the dark fields we go homeward: there is a light all round the horizon, which sheds a faint glimmer over the earth, but there is neither moon nor stars.

Just thus, as winter cometh on, and the fair

glory of summer is faded away, and is remembered only as a pleasant dream—just so shall we too fade and pass away. And, the strength of our spring and the proud glory of our summer departed, we shall follow them. Happy, if at our going we show good store of fruit, our barns filled with corn, and our sheaves bound up! So that when the last great harvest is gathered in, and the last great Christmas is come, we may join the everlasting carol to the glory of the Great Husbandman. If so, our close will be as calm and peaceful as the setting in of this autumn night, though the night which shall come then will be the one that cometh to all men, when this world and all its beauties are of no account :

When the pale waste widens around us,
And the banks fade dimmer away,
As the stars come out, and the night wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.

FRAGILIA

THE thought has doubtless occurred to many of us, as we walk along the miry and thorny yet still quaint and beautiful paths of this life, that we cannot be said to have any present, but that, as every moment as it comes to us becomes instantly the past, and as we cannot be said to live in what is no longer ours, and as it is impossible that we can exist, except metaphorically, in the past, we can therefore be said to live nowhere but on the very point which is neither future nor present, but is just on the verge of becoming present.

But it is clear that the immediate future, which according to this theory should be the most valuable and important period of time to us, is practically the least so.

It is true that dreams of the future occupy the mind to a considerable extent, especially in youth, but this future is the distant and not the immediate one,—even before that time arrives, which comes at any rate at times to most of us, when that wonderful future of the unknown and the possible begins more and more to fade away, until at last it seems to us that nothing, of that little which we can ever know, is unknown, and that nothing more can be possible to us.

If therefore the immediate future is of little value and interest to us, and the present is gone as soon as it is here, we are driven to the necessity of seeing that the really valuable possession is not the past, but what the past has brought to us and what it has left us; and thereby realising a little that the true home of human nature is not this present life, but another where "time shall be no more."

The real existence of the world of ideas, independently of that of matter, is an inquiry which to many persons will appear futile and vain; but it is certain that by no other study can we realise what spirit *is*, and what relation it has to our present visible life.

The ideal or spiritual world properly so-called is conceived by very few: what we do conceive is the past or the distant, seldom the ideal; the unseen perhaps, but rarely the unseeable. To conceive a world of ideas in which neither matter nor form shall have any place is probably the highest abstraction of which the human intellect is capable, and consequently nothing has ever been done in advancing morality or piety by the preaching of such an effort; but if it could be taught, it must surely prove a strong incentive to virtue, for though it is the fashion to sneer at the idea of a man's resisting the temptations of the flesh through the conception of a philosophical abstraction, yet it must be remembered that love towards a person is as entirely a mental and ideal effort as any abstraction of the reason can be; and I am inclined to think that love towards an *absent* person too often proves but a weak guardian against temptation.

It must be admitted that the Highest wisdom has rejected idealism as a means of influencing the world ; but, if we can penetrate its intention, this seems to have been only because it was impossible to *train* the world by it.

The anthropomorphism of the Bible grows less and less as we proceed ; and it is possible that, if mankind had proved more worthy, and therefore more capable, of it, a far clearer revelation of the purely ideal world might by this time have been ours.

The insurmountable difficulty in the way of our conception appears to be that of reconciling ideality with personality—an inquiry which seems to me so vast and impracticable that nothing impresses me more with a sense of our distance from the purely spiritual.

The highest conception of the Platonic theory—a conception so high as to be held by few even of its professed admirers—seems to me to be but anthropomorphism, under a fresh form and expressed in different words ; for if, following the maxim that “the truth of a thing is its conformity to the Divine Intellect,” we conceive a Creator forming all things after the ideas which had existed in His nature from all eternity—the Divine Essence being communicated as it is variously capable of being participated in by created beings (and consequently according to the variety of this imitability so are the possibilities of being)—what is this but conceiving a wise and powerful person ; and if we conceive of one personality, why not many ; and if so, and our idea of the spiritual world is one Divine

Person or King surrounded by other persons or subjects, what is there different in this picture of the spirit-world from that of the one which we inhabit ; and how have we escaped from material conceptions or in any way established ideality ?

No idea has been more familiar or more perpetually present to our race in all stages of its existence than that of *another* world, which for the sake of distinction has been called *spiritual*. From time to time there has been a strong antagonism to this belief, but the united instinct of humanity is opposed alike to pure scientific materialism and to profligate scepticism, and though often worsted in argument, is not defeated, and remains obstinately true to its recollections : it cannot forget that, in its firmest belief from its earliest days, spirits—saints and angels—have descended upon our fields, and trod our grass, and walked under our trees ; and that under the globe of night, and the cold brilliancy of the moon, thoughts of heaven and of the spirit-world, and of a future exalted state, have come in upon men's senses, together with the sweeping and rushing of the autumn wind among the leaves and the damp, long grass : and it cannot help feeling that, just as surely as these heavenly and spiritual thoughts come in upon us naturally, with all the sights and objects of its material home, just so surely it will in the end be found that spirit and matter, science and faith, are not separable, but are both wanted to make a complete man.

But though the heart of Man is thus sound, he does not for the most part understand in the

least the truth in which he believes ; for all he knows of the spirit-world is only that aspect of it which is not spirit, but is an outward guise which it has been compelled to assume in order in any degree to make itself perceptible to the sense of man. We could have had no religion now, no spirit-world, had it not been founded on the old heroic and personal one,—nothing different in its essential conception from that which the Hellenic mind formed out of the wanderings and troubles of those whose stories seemed to have so deeply impressed it, over the tossing waves, and along the salt-sea coasts, and in the towered cities of that weird, old, untrodden world, with its wild and high mountains and wondrous shores.

The first fact which a man has to realise is this, that spirit can never be apprehended or known or understood or seen or felt by matter ; and though it can, in some wonderful and inconceivable way, influence and move matter, yet it is only the kindred spirit within us which feels and is sensible of the approach of it. And that, so long as our lot is cast within the confines of a material existence, it can only become, in any degree, intelligible to us, just in proportion as it forfeits its true nature and its ideality and assumes the nature of its opposite and antithesis—so all-pervading and all-controlling in its influence is this body of death.

It is in its use and power in helping us to realise this that the great value and nobleness of music consists. In music without words we are conscious of the presence of a sensation which we

cannot feel, of words which we cannot hear, of thoughts which we cannot grasp, of a world of intellectual being which like a phantom is close to us, but which, from instant to instant as we think ourselves on the point of entering, always eludes our consciousness and vanishes away. No doubt this "insubstantial pageant faded" is the intellectual or ideal world, the world of spirits, our home for all eternity.

Hence we may see clearly what may be the use of such thoughts as those we began with, and especially of such as relate to the transitory nature of pleasure, which may perhaps convince us that, to our real selves and our true positions, the possessions of our intellect, the present is nothing, the future nothing, that the past is as much present as either, and that to the spiritual man already there is no more time.

I am not certain that the fragile and temporary nature of pleasure has not a charm of its own, especially as life advances. It would be difficult to say in what it consists, nor are we certain that it does exist. It would seem to arise from a sort of acquiescence in a fact of human nature, a proud acceptance of the lot and nature of humanity, and a perception that it would not be noble without its sorrows and its sufferings.

The hues of autumn, the sheen of the sunset across the wold, the waving corn, the stacks of the harvest,—all these things would be nothing to us but for the endearing thoughts which so many ages of men's hearts, chastened by sorrow, ennobled by reminiscence and regret, have linked with them; and not this only, but we are able to

feel that pleasure is not real in proportion to its duration, but that it is something abstract, which, once created, is independent of circumstance and change.

I remember once, after visiting a little town, we stopped the carriage at the last point at which it could be seen, and turned to look back. The view from that spot was very striking—a wide plain with the road sweeping in a picturesque curve, till it reached the quaint and straggling street, with its many gables crowned with the large church and lofty spire. On either side low hills, beyond the rise of Lansdowne, where Sir Bevil Greenville fell. The fields were covered with cowslips, and full of sheep and cattle; the world was happy with the warmth of early summer. While we stopped, possibly over a minute of time, the chimes from the church steeple rang out, low and far away, yet full and clear, thrilling all the air and satisfying the sense. The pleasure of that moment is more mine at this hour than if I stood upon the spot again.

There is a refinement in these pleasures which are rare in their occurrence and transitory in their nature—like the first waking on a Sunday with the half-conscious sense of the coming rest and worship of the day—which is not to be despised. I began a brief holiday in a lovely place on a Saturday evening, and slept, like Christian in the Palace Beautiful, in a chamber facing the sun-rising, and woke, and looked out of the window over the plain of Worcestershire, when the summer sun had risen about a quarter of an hour. It was a moment, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne

describes, not of our world at all. The toil of yesterday over, oblivion of sleep still between me and the morrow which was yet to come,—only his was confined to his own thoughts in his room in winter, mine was in presence of a pure and holy world lying, in beauty of colour and in rest of peace, beneath the newly arisen glory of the most glorious and beneficent of created things.

Such pleasures cannot be long. It is a necessity of their existence that they should partake of the spirituality of men's nature ; that, as they are only perceptible to cultured thought and feeling, so, as they are removed in their enjoyment from sense, they should be clearly marked, by the fragility of their existence, as belonging to mind and to eternity and not to matter and to time. Luring us on, and teaching us to look for pleasures apart from sense and time, to realise the essential nature of the unseen and the ideal, and to associate our lives and characters more and more with the life and character of One who is passed into the heavens, yet who still lives, and who, when on earth, cultivated solely those pleasures which can never die.

RELIGIO HISTORICI

And indeed it were somewhat strange, as well as sad, if a person disposed and accustomed to observe and consider, conversing with such instructive books as those of God's creatures and His providence, with an intention to take out practical lessons, should not find them.—ROBERT BOYLE'S *Occasional Reflections*, sect. iv. chap. i.

THE question whether the study of history is a useful and improving one—a question which I have heard argued in the negative by very sensible and intelligent persons—must surely be only part of a much wider question, viz. whether it be wise to engage in any mental study of any kind. For the object of any study can only be the knowledge of ourselves, our duties, and our powers; and in the endeavour after this knowledge, that science which tells us the deeds and thoughts, the beliefs and attempts, the successes and failures, of our own kind who have lived before us on the earth must without doubt greatly assist us. That there is a want of mathematical proof of the exact amount of the benefit which we have derived from the study of history is not more than may be said of any study whatever, except the learning of those arts by which we either gain our bread or maintain our bodies in health.

I think we may take it for granted that the

study of history *is* a useful and ennobling one ; that it raises us from the merely animal life of the present moment, and from the petty sympathies of our mediocre natures, to an existence in many distant ages, and to a friendship and a sympathy with the highest and noblest of our race ; and that it gives us all, what few of us otherwise would ever have, the spectacle of what human nature really is, and what it can be, when circumstances combine (which they so seldom do) with the aspirations and powers of the heart and intellect, and produce an actor, on the stage of the world's theatre, who commands for ever the love and admiration of mankind.

The great evil which has befallen the science of history is that its professors have been too fond of particular theories of their own. From the first dawn of history its facts have only been taken to support the favourite theories of different historians. Those who considered themselves the exponents of Biblical truth have arranged them all in one phalanx ; and the opposite party, the party of free inquiry, have too often forgotten their oft-repeated boast that they at least had nothing to do with theories, and sought only to discover the truth, and have arranged the facts (and even in some cases unblushingly falsified them¹) so that they might appear in that order which they supposed would be most damaging to their opponents ; and while insisting strongly on the changes of opinion, as showing the instability of their opponents' position, have too often

¹ The *Westminster Review*, the most pretentious organ of the free inquiry party, has more than once done this.

forgotten that their own assertions stand on very doubtful proof, and are very likely to be superseded in their turn. If we are to argue at all on such uncertain data, it is surely as fair to argue on the passing opinion of the day in *favour* of Revelation as *against* it; but those (seeming) facts which tell in its favour are depreciated as ephemeral, while those which seem to go against it, though perhaps equally unsettled, are received with avidity.

One of the acknowledged facts of our earliest history, which perhaps has been the cause of more theories than any other, is the similarity in the traditions and theologies of the most widely separated nations. The believers in a common origin of mankind (to which belief, indeed, most inquiry tends) have not considered this fact sufficient to account for so remarkable a similarity, but have started the most different, and in some cases extraordinary, theories. Nations have been sent flying about the earth like the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope, and the supposed journeys of the ten lost tribes of Israel might have formed the originals for the traditionary ones of the Wandering Jew himself. Even now these theories have not ceased, one having been recently started which places them in the north of Scotland, while the tribe of Dan was settled in Ireland, and both received visits from fellow Jews—missionaries of Buddha—who had previously been converted to that religion in India!

Setting aside all theories, there appears something unphilosophical, and almost childish, in this endeavour to account for every similarity of

tradition and habit of thought by theories of personal intercourse and conversation with men of other nations. Taking for granted, what modern science as well as orthodox antiquity would seem to teach, that men originally came from one parent stock, is it not more rational to take such coincidences as the natural result of the workings of a common human intellect, originally fallen, it is at least most pleasant to believe, from a high source?

Taking a few of these coincidences, we find in most nations a vague tradition of a dimly seen, a powerful, and a magnanimous Divinity, precedent to the ordinary gods of their current worship; and in the Scandinavian theology we even read of a time when this Divinity shall resume his sway, and rule triumphant over a new heaven and a new earth, *not* peopled, however (that glorious vision being reserved for Christianity), with a risen and purified humanity.

This belief is to be traced in a very interesting way in the Hellenic mind and writings. The Hellenic intellect, though always given to a species of worship (often amounting to no more than an expression of admiration and of thanks for benefits received) of an infinite number of objects, animate and inanimate, had yet in its higher development and aspirations a strong tendency towards unity, and (as also in the Scandinavian theology) this tendency took the form of one predominating Power or Deity—of one God, in fact—manifested to those old seekers after Him in that attribute which appeared most prominent in their experience of life—Fate or

Inavertable Necessity: "Fate," as Homer says, "whom none avoid, whoever is born." The Stoics held that fate was superior to all the gods, and the conviction at which Herodotus had arrived after a long, patient, and most intelligent inquiry into, and study of, the different forms of life, and the various opinions of the people, of his time, was of the absolute existence of a Power, which he calls "the Deity," who governed the world upon fixed principles of His own, and whom the generally known and worshipped gods had no power to change or to divert or to persuade; and who took a peculiar pleasure in helping and advancing the poor and wretched, and in debasing and casting down those of great estate, almost using the words of the Magnificat: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek." And although it is true that the old Greek thought he saw, in the actions of this Omnipotent Ruler, some signs of human capriciousness and jealousy, and probably was far from understanding the "humble and meek" of the earth in the Christian sense (a sense which it required Christ Himself to teach), yet we may not be hard upon him for this, while some religious opinions concerning the Providence and Character of God exist amongst ourselves, and while the true meaning of those words is not always understood even by us.

We find also in most nations a well-defined tradition of some primeval and supreme conflict—a conflict between gods and inferior demons, or between gods and men themselves,—and it is curious that, although these traditions are among

the earliest of our history, there is no mention of the expulsion of the evil angels from heaven in the Book of Genesis, seeming to prove that the Gentile nations could not have received this tradition from the Jews. It would be a very curious study to trace this belief from what some have believed to have been its origin—the presence of the gigantic Saurians in the oolite rocks, through all the Gentile theologies down to Milton, in connection with such passages in the Bible as speak of the “war in heaven,” most of which, occurring in the Book of Revelation, are confused in our minds with the primeval expulsion of Satan and his angels; and to see how much of the belief of orthodox minds on this latter subject is formed from the *Paradise Lost*, the ideas of which Milton is said to have borrowed wholesale from a Greek poem of the fifth century called the *Dionysiaca*, descriptive of the Titanic War.

Another of these general traditions is the horror of the pollution of blood, or of dead bodies, and of the fatal consequences of the defilement of sacred places thereby. This idea is seen all through the Old Testament and the Greek poets and tragedies, and attains its fullest development in a noble tradition of the Scandinavian mythology, in which the gods, having their mortal enemy, the Daemon Loc, in their power, and in spite of the foreknowledge they possess that ultimately he will destroy them all, refuse to slay him, lest they should defile their holy cities with blood.

We have already seen that, according to one theory, the existence of the geologic relics of the

pre-adamite world was known to the ancients, and was the groundwork of one of their most universal traditions, and it would really appear that they were not unacquainted with the geologic periods and convulsions. Their poets have described the desolation of more than one of these periods in their chaos, and the

Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,

appear not only to have been known to these old poets, but to have profoundly impressed their imagination.

These traditions are not mere coincidences—much less are they, I think, the result of direct communication by word of mouth and teaching; they form one of the strongest proofs of the common origin of our race, not so much because of the resemblances themselves, which might be accidental, or arise from many causes, but because in them and through them we can see the same mind working, the same ideas, the same ignorance, the same desire for instruction. When we consider how very little the nations after the Flood knew probably of the nature of God, or of their own origin, we cannot be very far wrong if we look on the earliest inhabitants of the first peopled countries, Syria, Greece, and Egypt, as men set down in the earth like little children in a large garden, perfectly ignorant of the meaning and powers of the objects they saw around them, with no instructor (or at least with One only very darkly understood), with no guide but their own senses; and who, partly from the

daily additions they made to their experience of facts, but very largely by the uncontrolled wanderings and dreamings of their intellect (wandering at large among beautiful and wonderful things, as all things seem beautiful and wonderful to a child), built up that structure of theology, poetry, tradition, history, physics, and ethics which has such a charm for us now, as being human nature very nearly by itself—human nature, perhaps, under its most picturesque aspect.

I say human nature almost by itself, because we have very high authority, as well as very sufficient proof from ancient literature itself, that the Divine Spirit did not leave the world, throughout all these ages, totally without some portion of its indwelling, but that God left Himself a witness, not only in the free bounties of Nature, but by half-understood promptings in the secret chambers of the human heart itself; making much of the history and writings of the classic ages sound more like allegory than history or philosophy.

If we allow ourselves fully to realise the child-like and totally unoccupied state of the human mind in these early ages, I think we shall understand many peculiarities both in ancient and modern history, because this state continued in a very great degree to very recent times. Revelation only touched very slightly upon man's intellect, or upon his knowledge of his dwelling-place, and the writings of the seventeenth century show no great dissimilarity to those of Greece and Rome. The most remarkable of

the effects of this state of things is the prominence and importance it gave to individual character and action. From the Homeric poems downward, this is what gives such an interest and picturesqueness to history, to almost within our own age; and the absence of this makes history now so dull, and its future prospects so dreary. Formerly individual human interest was supreme: ascertained facts were very few, and those few of a nature (such as death) that added to, rather than detracted from, individual prominence and influence; now facts are everything—science is crushing individuality out of the world; we live and move scientifically and in masses; we may be said to think by machinery and steam; there is no scope for individual action; the science of law fixes exactly what every man is to do, and that every man is to do very much alike (or rather we should say that the necessities of our modern life oblige us to submit to such a science of law). Nothing separates history from our own era so much as this want of commanding individual interest. The leading men of to-day do not excite the same feelings in their contemporaries that the hero of two centuries or more ago did, nor will they ever excite the same feelings in the readers of history. The nature of the age is against them, their own education is against them, their very virtues are against them. Our great men are men of cabinets and diplomacy, men of theories and principles (often beneficent ones), men of correspondence and blue-books; but they are not men of personal action, and never can rival those of

old in commanding individual interest or admiration. The age, indeed, would not endure heroes. A king who, at the head of his armies, took the field now for "the glory of God and the relief of man's estate" would be looked upon with the greatest suspicion. If Gustavus Adolphus or John Frederic of Saxony (Luther's friend) were now for the first time to appear on the European stage, the story they would leave in history would be very different from what it was; yet more noble characters, more favoured and drawn out by circumstances into striking development, it would be hard to find. No careers dazzle and excite, no individual characters absorb, no events stun, the sense of Europe like the Crusades, like the person of Charles the Fifth or Gustavus, like the defeats and death of Charles the Bold of Burgundy. The interest of these events was heightened by every ornament which outward circumstances could bestow. Everything at once and naturally mellowed itself into romance; every man's action, however common, was picturesque; there was not a house in Europe, not a dress, not an implement in daily use, not an occupation or custom or habit of the people, but which, whatever fault may be found with it, was at least this—picturesque. Picturesqueness in fact and individuality are the same things, for picturesqueness always accompanies individual thought and action and their productions, and it is the working of abstract laws upon masses of men which destroys the picturesque. This question is much more important than at first sight it looks, for it

accompanies us as we go back to the earliest dawn of European life—to the Homeric poems, and it assists us towards an understanding of the great question, whether any advance, or indeed any alteration, has taken place in the individual mental standard of mankind. For the united efforts of great minds having produced civilisation, and as one consequence, raised the minds of multitudes to an approximation to the highest standard, it is to individual minds then and now that we must look for an answer to that question; and as in questions of human civilisation these considerations take an important place, so in questions of the religious life of our race they occupy one not less so. For if we put on one side the foreign element of Revelation (as we have done that of the civilisation of the masses by artificial means), we shall find that the individual religious standard of the Homeric age was as high, in proportion to the present one, as the mental standard was; and it is impossible too highly to estimate the importance of this part of the inquiry, because many often forget the impassable gulf which exists between the pursuit of truth in material sciences and in the immaterial existence of which Revelation treats. It is a doctrine of the Socinian teachers, that in religious questions they cannot tell one day what they shall believe the next, and that they can only pray that they may be guided aright. In making this statement, they seem entirely to forget that (putting on one side Revelation, which is fixed, and in which no further discoveries

can be made) the human mind has not advanced one step in the knowledge of the immaterial world since the earliest Homeric days. The mind of the earliest, the most uncultivated Greek, when he gave the body of his friend back again to the kindly keeping of the earth that gave it life, saw as clearly the answer to the great riddle of Life and Death as (without the Christian faith) *we* see it. Standing beside that "grassy barrow" or that urn "filled with a little dust," his eye pierced just as clearly and as far into the awful night that lay before him as ours does. Standing by our grave-sides, as the earth rattles on the coffin-lid, just as dense a veil, just as impalpable a void, cuts us sharply off from the life beyond, baffling our intensest efforts, our keenest glances, as they baffled his.

The religion of the historian, therefore, is not so vague as at first would appear. He sees full evidence of a common humanity, of a mysterious similarity of ideas, of a singular property in all history, tradition, poetry, and literature, as if all these forms of human thought contained in them something more than met the eye—were, in fact, apologues and types, the outward manifestations of a secret power which, through many and dark ages, was silently, all but imperceptibly, working towards a certain end; teaching men, gradually but not the less surely, that, as Plutarch had learnt, they were "wanderers, strangers, and fugitives from God," and leading them, as may be seen sometimes even in their dark theologies, to understand something of the connection between the human and the Divine. He sees

also the impossibility of human nature of itself advancing one step beyond the limits of the earthly dwelling-place primevally assigned to it (the life of a little child being as incomprehensible as the eternal pre-existence of God). When he comes nearer to our own time, and looks more confidently for what is called "the hand of God in history," perhaps for a long time he is perplexed and cannot see it. He thinks that those who have pretended most clearly to see it were well-meaning but ill-advised men, that they selected those facts which pleased them, and resolutely shut their eyes to all that seemed difficult of subordination to their theory. He sees men of the most different and opposing creeds evidently bearing about with them the credentials of the same Master. He sees men the most holy, the most plainly under the influence of the highest motives, miserably mistaken—themselves the cause of incalculable mischief to that faith which he is trying to believe the true one. He sees the cause of truth forsaken, desolate, utterly beaten down and trodden out. The promises of Revelation, so far as he can see, are not fulfilled. He sees a general hope and desire among those of all creeds, not altogether, he thinks, unshared in by some of the most holy men, that their cause should be owned publicly before the multitude, that God would declare who was according to His own mind and who was not; but no cause has been so acknowledged, no sign of divine recognition has been vouchsafed, the awful calm of the blue heavens has been undisturbed during the acting of their tragedy, the triumph of their

foes has been complete. A phantasmagoria of men and events floats before him ; men seem in history to have walked indeed in a vain show ; the more he inquires into men and creeds, the more he is perplexed—he finds none which he can say is absolutely right, no one fully wrong ; the course of Nature maintains its impartial calm, shutting out the sight of God from him, and his constant prayer is that ejaculation of Isaiah, “ Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down ! ” Then perhaps gradually one fact comes out more clearly in all his study ; a fact not dependent on any theory—far above all theory ; a fact so infinite in all the innumerable incidents from which it is deduced, that no theory could have invented it ; a fact so absolutely one with humanity that scarcely a human being who ever lived but may be said to have had some share in its proof ; a fact so incontrovertible that no mind is blind to it ;—the fact which all history, literature, human life before a certain period pointed forward to, and to which all history, literature, human life after that period points back—three short years of a human life passed upon the lake shores and in the towns and villages of Judæa ; a life so intensely human that every human heart at once bears witness to its truth, and yet so far above what had ever before it been known of humanity (placed on the other side of so wide a gulf from the lives and words and minds of the noblest of human kind that had preceded it), that no theory of the gradual development of human teaching, no theory of the improvement by one great teacher of the ideas and discoveries of his

predecessor, can ever account for or explain the divine teaching, the perfect example of this life. The student concentrates his attention upon this life round which all history centres, in which the longing of ages is fulfilled, upon which the intense restlessness perceptible in all the highest of the classic writings (a restlessness quite different from any feelings that we now experience) at last found tranquillity. He traces it to its end—an end which human nature would not have predicted of such a life, but which Plato, in a moment of divine illumination, saw *would* be the end of such a life, as he saw that if human nature ever was perfected it would be *by* such a life; and having followed it so far, he begins to see that all the confusion and perplexity which before had troubled him was but what this Divine Life itself exemplified, and what surely this Divine Person led His followers to expect. He finds that, in the study of His teaching, all creeds, doctrines, disputes of different churches, theories of inspiration—all lose themselves in one single command, one single doctrine—belief in Him. He sees that in disputes about the doctrine men have forgotten the Person, that in discussions on what His servants have taught they have forgotten His own teaching, and he begins to understand that, though possibly necessary to be passed through, all these confusions and mistakes are no argument against, nor in fact have anything to do with, the main doctrine on which the Christian faith revolves, the belief in the Son of God—a belief which during His life was hard to attain to by reason of the lowliness and desertion of His

earthly estate, and which all through history has been not less hard, because His servants often seem deserted, and the promises of His Gospel are often fulfilled in a way which has more to do with faith than with sight.

As I write these words, with the echoes of the Easter chant still ringing in my ears, it seems to me that the religion of the historian, more than that of any other, should lead him to cling tenaciously to the belief in the Person of Christ ; that he, more than any other, can fully know the difference between His life and words and the lives and words of other teachers ; that he, more than any other, can understand the utter desolation which would have been the lot of the world if that life had never been lived, those words never spoken ; that he, more than all others, should join in the anthem, " Christ is risen from the dead, *therefore* let us keep the feast."

NATURE'S HOMILY

BY A VERY LOW PERSON, LITTLE BETTER THAN
A COMMON TRAMP

“Consider the lilies.”

IT has been a question mooted heretofore in this society, whether the appearance of a country has any influence upon the mind of men, and it has been asserted in a recent essay (at least, so I am given to understand, for, of course, so common an individual as myself can have no connection with so aristocratic a body as that into which I have intruded myself) that such is not the case.

Now, as I have some acquaintance (in the way of my occupation) with this said Nature, and great love and veneration for her, I have written this paper in order that I may not seem ungrateful for her free lessons and manifold gifts.

In this life—I have no wish to utter commonplace, but I must state my position—in this life, we have misfortunes and sorrows that wither up the heart, and petty vexations and disgusts which sour it many a time and oft. I myself have experienced these in common with all, the last perhaps in a greater degree than many; but I rejoice in this,

that in the very nature of my occupation I have a balm and a remedy which has never failed me yet.

In this world there are two often opposing works—the works of a great Creator and those of man. As far as my knowledge goes, I have not known one of the former which has been wanting in beauty; in the latter I have found—who has not?—cruelty, deceit, falsehood, beauty desecrated by unworthy uses and excesses, the noblest things in life prostituted to the accomplishing of base ends, and thousands living without knowledge of the true intent of their existence, their whole faculties and every thought of their souls dragged down to earth, engrossed utterly by the most mechanical and mind-degrading occupations. The mind dwelling among these evils, and mourning over them, becomes first soured and disgusted and sceptical of the existence of good, then sinks into an utter weariness and spleen, seeing so much evil in its fellow-mortals, that the milk of human kindness and love is dried up, it can discern no good in the actions of the human race, and at last, driven to despair, it is willing to curse everything and die.

For all this there is a remedy which I recommend to all. Out of this turmoil of man's work and man's earthly aims, go to the works of the Creator—to those works on which His mark has not been defaced, to those works whose beauty on earth is a foreshadowing and promise of the beauty in heaven, a testimony and proof of the existence of God, a continual homily, calming and preaching down man's wicked and angry passions, soothing his despair, speaking of love

and forgiveness of injuries and glory to God. "Consider the lilies"!

You are disgusted with the strife and contentions and deceits that you are a witness of? You see around you no other god worshipped but Mammon? You begin to despise your old youthful dreams? You look upon fancy as unworthy your regard? You think you have grown wiser because you have no longer any faith in anything? Still you are not satisfied: you are altogether a-weary and disgusted, your ear is full of a hideous hubbub of contending sounds, you know no longer any peace or rest, you feel that you are becoming soured, cold-hearted, sneering at everything, you own yourself as you are—bankrupt in soul! The first fine day go out alone from the town or from the city; at the first hilltop you come to, sit down and rest. Before you lies the country; it may be dull, flat, uninteresting, but it *is* the country—it is God's work and not man's. Do not try to think; within, as well as without, be still. Presently that continual hubbub and confusion in your ears grows fainter and less deafening. Presently that tumult and contention to which your mind was wholly given grows less and less distinct, your disappointments, which before you thought unendurable, are lessened in importance, the bargains in which you have been overreached, the injuries you have received, the mean deceits that have been put upon you, appear now of such little importance that you can forgive those who have sinned against you. You have found a place where such things are not considered of, a life where such things are not known, a mind-study into which such things

cannot intrude. There is nothing here which can remind you of them. This plain of verdant fields and shallow streams stretching to the horizon—What does it know of them? or those green hedges which are perfect gardens of wild-flowers? or these groves and copses in which the birds are singing? or those shady hills over whose slopes the shadows are passing?—Have they anything in common with that world which you have found so base?

I know a scene like this imaginary one, which I saw for the first time one day in early spring when it was spread over with its first faint covering of green. The soft breezes blew over it daintily, bringing up the hill such pleasant country-noises as the rustling of the sedges on the banks of the pools, and the splashing of the water over the floodgates of the mills, and the lowing of cows, and the cawing of the rooks, and the barking of a dog sometimes. What would the most lovely prospect be without such music, which assures us that it is not a fine picture we are gazing on, but that same mother earth in which we have a human interest, in common with the whole world our kin? And to warm the heart sufficiently towards this world-kindred, the bright spring sunshine rested over all, bringing out the green of the springing grass and hedges, and here and there, in the dull brown woods, of an early budding tree, and brightening, cheering, beautifying all the scene, so that the heart of the beholder, refreshed and thankful, rose from earth to heaven, and looking upwards, he saw the blue and cloudless sky stretched out above his head.

Here, then, are two things plainly taught us—first, that this earth, which we thought so base and wicked, is not only not wicked but very beautiful; and secondly, that all mankind, our brethren, the last and most perfect work of the same Creator, must necessarily in their original state be very good and beautiful too, and instead of hating them with a foolish, childish animosity, we should hate that sin which has soiled this paradise and made us what we are!

I remember one evening in summer I was walking along a pathway at the top of some cliffs overhanging the sea. I was at that time in a very bad and wicked humour. A person whom I considered I had cause not to like, and who, as I thought, had several times done me injuries with the direct purpose of injuring me, had that day requested me to do him some little service which would cause no inconvenience on my part, except the smallest amount of trouble. As I walked along the cliff, I thought over this request, and asked myself why I should go out of my way to oblige this man who had injured me. Here was a fine opportunity of avenging myself for these injuries. No! I would not stir my little finger to help him. I would give myself the pleasure of rejoicing in his disappointment. Just as I made this resolution, and arrived at this satisfactory frame of mind (which rivalled, as far at least as my humble means would permit, that of the old serpent in the first garden), I came to a stile. Mechanically almost, according to habit, I paused as I mounted it and sat down. Before me was a hay-field with the grass cut and left to dry;

on the left hand, at some distance, was an old house with a grove of trees about it, whose tops were shorn level by the cold north-east winds of winter sweeping up from the sea. A little to the right was a noble bay, bright with the yellow sands, and beyond that, the blue and boundless sea, the ships sailing on it, like white birds. The blue sky was overhead. The evening sun, setting low in the heaven, tinged everything—grass, trees, cliffs, sea, sand—with a warm golden colour, and the summer air, stirred by the faintest breeze of wind, breathed visibly as if with life. Like one that comes suddenly into some glorious presence, the beauty of the scene oppressed me, so that I dared scarcely breathe for awe. Then the unmistakable lesson and sermon of it came upon me with resistless force. What was I—miserable worm that I was!—that I should mar this beauty, as far as my poor power could mar it, by my childish animosities and contemptible (if it had not been so wicked) spite? Did not this beautiful world serve the living God with praise continually day and night? Had not that sea, which was beating wave after wave successively upon the sand with a low murmuring sound, continued from the first moment of its creation, thousands of years before I was born, to obey, in the unceasing regularity of its ebb and flow, the commands of its Creator, and would it not continue to do so long after I was dust? What was I, again, who, for the little moment I was placed here, could not even nourish kindly feelings towards my neighbour, but must try to the utmost of my puny efforts to increase his discomfort, to destroy what faith he may still have

in the existence of good in the world, and, above all, that I should glory in my work and rejoice in my brother's misfortune? In the presence of that great sea, coeval with time itself, beating continually like the pulsation of a great heart, how contemptible seemed all the strifes and contentions and bitterness with which we have filled the world! I thanked Nature, and, through her, her Maker, for having opened to me so glorious a book, which I had read inadvertently at this my great need of the lesson written there.

I believe it was asserted in the essay to which I have referred before, that the country in which they dwelt had no influence on the mind of the common people. I have seen in my tramping, in the difference between life in great towns and small villages, what I think is a sufficient answer to this. There is a village some five miles from this town of Birmingham, in which I found myself one summer's evening when the sun was setting. I had been all day tramping about the country, visiting the old churches. I had dined off bread and cheese and beer in a little ale-house on the hot and dusty Coventry Road, and had met with more courtesy there from an old countryman of whom I asked the way than I have experienced from many who would be very angry if they were not called fine gentlemen. Afterwards I came along a path over the fields, my heart so warmed with love of the great beauty about me, that without much poetical exaggeration I was like the river of which Julia speaks in the play :

Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage.

And coming to this village, I found out the sexton and got him to show me into the church. His talk—this dweller in the village—was not like the talk of the man of cities. You might call it simple and commonplace, and perhaps it was. He told me that he remembered an entirely different congregation to that which now met in the church, and that he had buried them all! He told me of a great family who had formerly lived near, and had worshipped there, but were all now dead. He showed me their great titles on the monuments, and their great carved pew, and he said that all their greatness and all their grand titles were of no use now, and could not keep them from the common lot. Many of their monuments showed that the silent inhabitants had died in youth, and one was that of an officer. He told me he remembered him coming to the church when he was hardly yet a man, in his splendid uniform,—so handsome and brave-looking,—and he made me read the inscription which told how he too died still young, of fever, in a distant land. He told me that though he was sixty years old, all his life seemed like one day, and he remembered the time when he sat in the gallery—he showed me the very place—among the boys of the village school, as if it had been yesterday; and so it would be, he said, with me too when I grew old. Then, pleased perhaps because I listened to him with a plain interest, he said he would leave me the keys and I should go up the tower and see as pretty a view as ever I saw in my life. And I did see it! Do not sneer at that! I saw the green country with the shadows passing over

it and the evening sun shining on it. I saw here and there the village steeples pointing up to heaven. I saw the birds flying overhead to their nests. Above me rose the steeple, casting its shadow over the quiet village below me. Oh so quiet! with the old houses that had stood there for two hundred years,—longer perhaps,—and the little children playing safely in the street. But when I walked round the tower and looked the other way, I could see, beyond a separating belt of wild country, a black cloud in which could just be discerned a hundred chimneys. I knew too well what it was. I knew that under that black cloud were 300,000 human beings crowded together. I knew too well that among them was crime, vice, poverty, despair, disease. I knew—would I had not!—that, to too many of them, the day of wretched toil being almost over, the night of more wretched crime would soon begin. And you tell me that the mind-influence of these two places was the same!

In all my wanderings I have learnt this, that man ought first to love and serve the great God who has made so beautiful an earth, to love also his fellow-beings, whom God has created in His own image, and to wait patiently for that glorious time when all things will be alike beautiful in earth as in heaven. And I have remembered thankfully, whilst wondering at the beauty, glory, and magnificence of the universe, that though its glory and magnificence is such that the human mind cannot conceive it, yet He that careth for the sparrows made it all.

THE END OF LEARNING

I WAS much pleased the other day, in reading the *Saturday Review*, by some sentences in a paper on the Life of Channing, the famous Unitarian minister at Boston in America, where the writer, after speaking of the unpractical character of Channing's experience, goes on to say :

A spectator remonstrating and speculating on the affairs of the world, with no occupation which produces any very definite or ascertainable result, is cut off from one of the greatest sources of knowledge and of sympathy with human nature. It is an immense advantage to any man to form part of an organised system, and to have duties to discharge which are not entirely selected by himself. The knowledge which he thus obtains of his own relations to life, and the participation in operations in which he plays a subordinate and not very agreeable part, give invaluable lessons about the constitution and conditions of society.

It is good for a man, especially for a sensitive man, to be placed occasionally in vulgar and in invidious positions.

We cannot think too highly of the truth of these sentences. It is intensely interesting to mark the effect of what we sometimes think would be so desirable in our own case—an entire exemption from an uninteresting, plodding round of daily uncongenial duties. No complaint is more common, amongst us who are engaged in any trade, and who have any tastes and desires other

than those of a mere commercial man, than that of want of leisure to follow our favourite pursuits, and of the imperious and absolute demand which business makes upon our attention, and there is no doubt a great deal of truth in this complaint. Not only is nearly the whole of the day occupied in these often uncongenial duties, but the necessity of entire application to these duties is so absolute, and the exertion consequent on the application so great, that the tired mind and body are often equally unfit at the termination of the day's labour to start again in fresh pursuit.

These things are so generally known and felt that it seems commonplace even to mention them, but I think that there are some considerations which, if properly valued, would bring consolation even to those who now feel their deep privation the most.

I think it will be granted that there are few situations which allow of no leisure whatever. We are often surprised at the amount of literary work done by those who, we know, are most occupied in other pursuits, proving that even these must be able to find time for reading in the midst of their work. It is to such as these, who think that they have most to complain of, that I would speak.

It is well for all of us to consider what things are most to be desired in this life, what thing we should most strive to attain to, what thing it was the Creator's intention to advance us in when He placed us here. I have no hesitation—I *can* have no hesitation in saying that we are placed here for our advancement in learning. By learn-

ing I do not mean only the learning of the book-man, or the learning of the man of science, or the learning of the divine; but I mean the universal learning to which all men equally are called—that learning which should go on through our whole life, which we should draw from all the objects, animate and inanimate, around us—from the works of man as well as from the works of God; from the history of mankind, as well of the bad as of the good, as well of the present as of the past, as well from the busy workshop as from the quiet study, as well—either for warning or emulation—from the meanest as from the noblest things in life.

It is by our proper learning from all these things, through the guidance and assistance of the eternal Spirit of God, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, that we may reach the highest walk of the holy life—a life not holy through an ignorance of or an absence from the world, but holy through a God-implanted knowledge of it and a God-assisted labour and work in it—and so lay up for ourselves a treasure and a sustenance for eternity.

If we believe in the perfectly wise plan of the Creator, we must believe that we are not placed in this world merely to escape and fly from it, but that we are here not only to work for the good and improvement of others, but also to learn from that work and from the world in which that work is done. We are not only spirits, but at present we are bodies too. With the affairs of the spirit-world we have not at present much to do. What we have to do is to enter with all our

strength into, and assist in, that plan of redemption and advancement of ourselves and of the whole world conceived by an all-wise God before the world was; and we can best do this by learning (by the light of as much revelation from the spirit-world as God has seen fit to show us) the lesson of *this* world in which we are placed and *this* life in which we breathe.

And where is this best learnt? Not assuredly in some secluded cloister, in the study of a learning of our own and not of God's appointing, is this wide, all-containing lesson understood. In the midst of the world's toil and bustle and sorrow, and in the full hearing of its great solemn-beating heart, are the deepest, gravest, noblest truths apprehended and realised. No part, however mean, of this life's experiences is useless towards the attainment of this end.

There has been too much difference made in the shallow philosophy which passes current between the world and the study, the college and the workshop. Really, as I have said, they are all one. Life should be regarded as one great university where there are many schools and many professions, but where one end is always kept in view, or rather, where some pursuits, higher and nobler than the others, sanctify, purify, and exalt into one perfect whole, where no one portion is useless or dishonourable. How well this was known by the great master of thought, he proved when he wrote: "So that the exercise" (in the university) "fitteth not the practice" (in the world), "nor the image, the life: and it is ever a true rule in exercises, that they be framed

as near as may be to the life of practice, for otherwise they do pervert the notions and faculties of the mind, and not prepare them."

Therefore it seems to me, in considering these things, that we ought rather to rejoice than grumble at our situation, placed as it is, not in any Arcadia of pleasure of our own choosing or creating, nor amidst academic groves of human planting, but where, if we will but learn them, every day brings lessons of self-denial, forbearance, industry; where innumerable opportunities occur of practising kindness, love, charity, and of becoming acquainted with the great miseries, the great joys, the great hopes, and, by the blessing of God, of the great future of the world; and where our leisure, if well employed, is generally sufficient to enable us so to elevate our thoughts and understandings (by the help of the great treasures of reading) as to catch the meaning and profit by the lessons of our daily life.

And as I began by saying that learning is the end of all things, so I may now go back to my title and say that this is the end of all learning—to

Grow, perforce, acquainted with the woe,
The strife, the discord of the actual world,
And all the ignoble work beneath the sun.

And by growing acquainted with these things, to learn our own station in and relation to the general life of man, and so, however ignoble and unspiritual our work may seem here, play by no means an ignoble part in the eyes of Him whose wisdom, providence, and perfect rule we are daily learning more and more to understand.

Let us then, in all our pleasures or business or book-learning—the three occupations of our mortal life—pray continually that we may keep stedfastly in view Him who is the Founder and Example of the holy life, and that His Spirit may enlighten us to the perfect learning of that for which we are placed in this world; and, if we do so, let us be very certain that, thousands of years hence, we shall not regret that we had not been trained entirely as we should have trained ourselves, nor learnt just that lesson which we should have liked the most, but that He who taught as never man taught had Himself trained us in the stern but infinitely noble lesson of His *earth*, to enable us to participate in and to understand the infinite glories of His heaven.

THE LAST OF THE RABBIS

A SKETCH

DEDICATED, WITHOUT PERMISSION, TO NATHANIEL
HAWTHORNE

In the midst of the synagogue, at the Jewish settlement in China, is a railed space from whence the Law used to be read, but it is never used, as they have now no Rabbi, and have forgotten their knowledge of Hebrew.
—*Lecture on China and its Revolution.*

AND the knowledge of Hebrew faded gradually out of the minds of the people, and the last of the Rabbis was very old, and the people were forgetting their ancient customs, and were ceasing to be a peculiar people, and were mingling with the nations among whom they dwelt. And the heart of the Rabbi was moved with sorrow, and he preached to the people, that they should learn Hebrew and keep in mind the traditions of their fathers. And he spoke so eloquently to them, that they promised to obey, and began to learn. But they had quite forgotten their ancient language, and it was very hard to learn. And the affairs of life and intercourse with strangers were continually interfering, and one by one they lost all pleasure in their task, and went each his way to his business or his pleasure ; and the unceasing

hours flew by unheeded, and the last of the Rabbis grew very old.

The evening sun was shining drowsily upon the simple edifice that served the wanderers from a far distant land for their house of prayer, and the congregation were thronging into the synagogue to evening worship, and the Rabbi passed through them for the last time to his accustomed place to read the Law. He was very old and decrepit, but his intellect remained unshaken, and the knowledge of his high and sacred calling made his gait erect and his presence noble even to the last. He bent for a few moments in silent prayer, and then, raising his head, gazed round him with a restless and troubled eye, as if seeking for some one who would fill his place when he at last was gathered to his fathers. But though he gazed anxiously over all the assembled people, he saw not one. He saw before him the descendants of his fathers, who had travelled long a weary journey over a barren land; he saw before him the children of Abraham and the prophets, and of the old sacred heroes of the Bible—God's own peculiar people—far, far away from their native land, their own Canaan, their "land of promise," in a foreign country, amid a strange people; and he saw them departed from the manners of their fathers, and from the knowledge of their language; he saw them in dress assimilating to the people among whom they lived, and in manners too; but though he saw many round him who were learned in the lore and well read in the books of the Chinese, yet he saw none who could take his place—none who, when his voice was for ever

silent, could read the Law. And as he bent his head over the sacred book—old and venerable from the hands of a long chain of Rabbis—the sight of it recalled emotions that almost overpowered him, and he thought of all the traditions of the people, since their sojourn in that far-off land, and he thought of his own training for the priesthood, and his regarding the high station he had since reached with such feelings of reverential awe; and when he thought of all this, and of the whole history of his life, spent among this people, he was very sad, and his voice, as he began to read, trembled exceedingly. But as he proceeded, and read of the everlasting promises for fulfilment in the latter days, and of the innumerable acts of condescension and mercy of the Most High, his voice became firm and high, and rolled forth melodiously through the building and out into the still air beyond, like the fabled death-song of the swan. And it was the last time the Law was read, for the Rabbi went home and sickened, and lingered a little time and then died, and the Law was read no more; but the people still continued to worship in the synagogue, and the book still remains open as the last of the Rabbis left it upon the old, time-worn desk, as if it were waiting for the raising up of a new Rabbi to read therein. And there is a feeling of awe in the minds of the people, which causes them to leave it so—a feeling of mysterious reverence connected with a book containing such great and glorious truths, to them, by their own self-imposed degeneracy and ignorance, sealed and unknown. So the book lies there ever, with its face upwards, and will

probably lie there through all time, and the Last Day will find it there, open in the self-same place.

And the stranger from a Western clime entered the little synagogue, and looked upon the book ; and he thought that he could read there one of the innumerable lessons from God to man—lessons scattered over all His created earth, in every tree and leaf and flower, for unheeding man to read. For he saw in that open yet silent book a mournful lesson of man's headlong pursuit after the things of his body, and of his carelessness of the things concerning his immortal self. And the stranger pondered much upon this lesson, and upon the mutations and changes of this present life, and he thought of the words of a poet of his own land—words left just as he wrote them—as he laid down his pen for ever, from his unfinished labour on one of the greatest poems the world ever saw—words most beautiful in themselves, but inexpressibly beautiful as the last words of a great mind, before being called to inherit those joys of which he writes :

Then 'gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd
Of that same time, when no more change shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things, firmly stayd
Upon the pillours of Eternity,
That is contrayr to Mutabilitie ;
For all that moveth, doth in change delight,
But thenceforth all shall rest eternally
With Him who is the God of Sabaoth hight,
O ! Thou great Sabaoth God, grant me that Sabbath's sight.

VESTIGIA

INTRODUCTION

CHARLES DICKENS, in one of his tales, fancifully imagines a certain street so full of the echoes of passing footsteps, that the sound of them, forcing itself constantly into the thoughts of the dwellers there, caused them to weave theories respecting them into the individual experiences of their lives. They seemed the tumultuous rush of a great multitude, confusedly running hither and thither different ways, and affecting the ear somewhat as a family of ants affects the eye, among which there is vast bustle and hurry with little or no perceptible result. The footsteps in the tale were to those that heard them terrifying; they said with the satirist "me vestigia terrent." The footsteps which I have been thinking about are as confusedly intermingled and involved, and are more conducive even than these to reverie, but they happily have nothing terrifying about them; it is not possible that they can influence our actual lives further than by enabling us perhaps to pass a pleasant hour, or, at the most, it may be to increase a little in us that gracious love of our kind, the expression of which, in the mouth of the

Roman player, called down the applause of the listening theatre so long ago.

Accompanying, and yet apart from, the stately march of history is a rushing sound of thousands of footsteps hurrying to and fro, like the throng of the noisy and unheeded populace following and surrounding the tramp of the military in some triumphal progress through a city. History cannot notice them except here and there, and when it does they lose half their meaning and interest when brought into presence of the great events of the world, and of the stately pageant of the collective acts of nations. They lie hidden in books which are not upon our tables every day; sometimes they seem to vanish altogether out of sight, and many folio pages must be turned to find one of them; at other times they come thronging in upon us like the footsteps in the tale, till we almost think that the past is present with us, and that it is possible to be on familiar terms with our ancestors, partake of their life, and live in their homes from day to day.

There is a certain hour in the summer day which always seems to me, fancifully enough, to be to the eye and the senses what the familiar life of past generations of our countrymen is to the senses and mind. When noon is past and the afternoon not quite begun, between two and three o'clock, there is a time when the brilliancy of the morning is not lost in, but softened by, the golden haze of the afternoon. There is a hush over Nature not so oppressive as that in the hottest part of the day, yet still calm and dreamlike.

The shadow of the trees is light, not darkly defined like noon, nor gloomy as in the evening. The breeze that an hour ago was still is now whispering in the grass; the dead sleep is awakened by a lovely dream; the light over the distant landscape and on the fleecy clouds has neither the glare of the noonday nor the sleepy glow of the afternoon, but conveys a sense of life and action, chastened and calmed with what soon may be repose. With something of this form and gesture come before us those portions of our past into the details of which we are able to penetrate with in some degree a familiar eye—as in the blue landscape “distance lends enchantment,” a golden sunshine lightens upon it, most of what is unpleasant and painful passes away, the summer sun shines on quaint and gabled houses and churches, on prim garden walks and smooth bowling-greens, on an Arcadian country, and verdant woods swarming with life, and untainted, as is the blue sky over them, with a trace or wreath of smoke. And the simile, though fanciful, will hold still farther. At these spell-laden moments of the summer day the eye may glance at different objects, over each of which the genius of the hour casts its charm. At one time perhaps we gaze upon the distant view of a fair city, with its towered cathedral, its winding river and stately bridge, and the flat meadows around it edged with trees; over the long bridges and through the winding streets, we see the throng pressing in and out, emmet-like, yet plainly seen. This is human life as seen perhaps most picturesquely, all the pain and squalor and

misery done away; but next time we have another scene.

Far away from any houses or homes of men a green field stretches up, crowned at the top against the sky with a tiny village church; beyond and far below the blue expanse of sea, right and left the white headlands stretching out; within the girdle of the churchyard wall the green hillocks, over which the fresh breeze blows briskly, bending down the scarlet poppy and the blue thistle flowers, that raise their heads again auntily as it passes by. So inexpressibly sweet and tender, so perfect in its calm, so holy in its purity, that you think nothing but an eternal Sabbath day can ever exist in such a spot. The dead all around you, the air itself laden with the sighing and the voices of the past, surely nothing of week-day or common life can ever intrude into so calm a scene. So in these dim old days, embalmed in musty books, you may see and mingle as you please in the gay festival, or busy town, or in the shock of the battlefield; or you may retire to the plain country-home of the philosopher or divine. You may sit in his study, with the latticed garden window, and the sunlight through the jessamine leaves gilding the fruit and flowers on the bookcase, or the brown gold-lettered calf of his volumes, his only wealth; or you may walk by his side in his garden by the trimmed yew-hedges, and whether in the garden or the study, listen to such high and noble discourse as perhaps you never heard before, clothed in English words of such majestic rhythm and perfect cadence

as certainly English words have never since been set to.

Yet again, there are places in England—fewer, perhaps, year by year, but still there are places where there is nothing but what, should one of our forefathers revisit it, would strike upon his eye with a familiar sense—the footbridge across the stream, the old mill, the black-timbered houses, the gabled hall, the shadowed church. This last, indeed, is the closest tie we possess in country or in town to the seventeenth century. There are churches in England in which no single change has been made for two hundred years; in every church so little that our awakened ancestor, were he to enter, would feel among familiar things. It is not in books alone that the life and the England of the past must be studied, but in the life and the England of the present. The seventeenth century may be said to be the key of the nineteenth; and, in more things than many would believe, our thoughts and actions and disputes are but a repetition of the thoughts and actions and disputes of two hundred years ago. We shall best understand our forefathers by standing in their footsteps, and by remembering that nothing happened to them but also is common to us: that they were touched by the same affections that we are, hoped the same things, and tried, many of them, to serve the same Master, and to do something to benefit that fellowship of humanity to which we and they alike belong.

I do not offer myself as a guide to this familiar intercourse: I am only a seeker needing help myself. The path is only just opening to me,

and I am not sure of the way ; many times I shall fail ; many times tire those who may listen to me ; many will leave us and go somewhere else. No doubt it would be much better if we had a practised guide ; nevertheless, there is some pleasure in finding out the path for ourselves. In some great houses and gardens is not the cicerone, though learned, sometimes a bore ? Is not every little discovery, in itself perhaps not of much worth, pleasant to us because we found it unassisted ? Shall we try ?

“Our fathers find their graves in our short memories,” writes Sir Thomas Browne ; “grave-stones tell truth scarce forty years. To be read by bare inscriptions like many in Grueter . . . and to have new names given us like many of the mummies, are cold consolations unto the students of perpetuity.” The story of the past, always vague and dim, grows dimmer and more vague when we attempt to read it in detail in the inscriptions and on the tombstones of the dead. For some few decades of years, perhaps, the story may be clear and easily read ; then the writing becomes confused and defaced, and we go on but uncertainly and make frequent mistakes. Inscriptions themselves are often mistaken, and, as Sir Thomas Browne hints, a stone sometimes covers a grave wherein lies a new tenant, himself calmly regardless of the false title by which he is remembered in the world which he has left. In the next degree of antiquity, the inscription is entirely effaced, and the stately, though perhaps

broken, effigy lies silently from year to year, passed by and gazed upon by thousands, sullenly refusing to tell the story it was erected to relate. But far off as the life once recorded on this silent tomb may seem, there are lives still farther off. In the forgotten pages of some old chronicler is set down that in some still older book, now lost for ever, is the description of a tomb, even then destroyed, erected to the memory of some one even then unknown. What a long vista of forgotten existence does such a thought as this suggest! What a pathos of forgotten memories, of long-buried hopes, the never-ceasing monotone of the old story, always with the same beginning and the invariable end! The dry and gloomy pages of heraldry and of pedigree catch something of the mellow light of the human pity that springs in our hearts at this voiceless, yet eloquent, pleading from the dust. Lists of names and titles assume somewhat of reality, and what the great essayist found among the tombs of the abbey we find in them.

Sir Thomas Browne refers to one of these writers, James Grueter, who is worthy of a few words.

He was the son of a burgomaster of Antwerp, one of the signers of that famous petition to the Duchess of Parma, to whom the not less famous nickname of Guenx was given. His mother was one of those educated Englishwomen of that time, and herself taught him Latin and the classic authors. He was a man of strong, conscientious feeling, and left the chair of Professor of History at Wittenberg, and refused one at Padua, on

account of religion. He became professor at the University of Heidelberg, of what chair does not appear, but he must have lived there from 1602, as in that year he published from thence the two last folios of his great book of inscriptions and epitaphs, *Inscriptiones Antiquae totius orbis Romani*, which he dedicated to the Emperor Rudolf the Second. Besides this book, he was a most voluminous author, one of those painstaking and unwearied scholars who adorned that age. It is related of him that he studied standing all day and the greater part of the night. At the siege of Heidelberg by Tilly in 1622, he lost his library, which had cost him 1200 golden crowns, and which his knowledge of bibliography had enabled him to collect. After the taking of the city he made great efforts to recover it, but, pitiful to relate, without success. The remaining five years of his life he passed in the pleasant neighbourhood of Heidelberg, amid the vineyards of the Neckar and the waving slopes of the Odinwald, among which, going out one day to visit his son-in-law, he was taken ill and died. His book was republished in 1707 by John George Grevius, another great scholar, professor of eloquence, politics, and history at Deventer, and the author of *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanorum* in twelve folio volumes, and *Thesaurus Antiquitatum et Historiae Italiae* in three.

We will leave these foreign places and come home to England.

On the 28th of May 1631, John Weever, an English scholar, a native of Lancaster and a

Cambridge man, was writing his epistle to the reader in his house in Clerkenwell Close.

Clerkenwell Close was then a pleasant place of residence in the fields, formed out of the cloisters and buildings of the old Priory of St. John of Jerusalem and the adjoining nunnery of Clerkenwell, which had been saved from destruction in Henry the Eighth's time for the singular reason that he wanted them to keep his tents and toils for the chase. The place, as is well known, received the name it now bears from a well near it, where the parish clerks of London were wont to meet to perform miracle plays. John Strype, the author of the *Lives of the Archbishops*, says that he had drunk of this well and found the water excellently clear, sweet, and well-tasted; and Weever himself, in a passage which is curious when we think of what the place is now (speaking of an equally celebrated well in the next parish), calls it "a certain sweet, wholesome, and cleare fountaine or well which, for the virtue of the water, has amongst the common people been reputed and called holy. It is now decayed and indeed quite spoiled with soile, dung, and other filthinesse, purposely there laid, for the heightening of the ground for garden plots." During the whole of the seventeenth century the buildings at Clerkenwell were the residence of noblemen and gentlemen. They had lost much of the ancient state and beauty they possessed before the Reformation, even when Weever lived there. He tells us of the great Bell Tower, "a most curious piece of workmanship, graven, gilt, and enameld, to the great beautifying of the Citie,"

and which had been destroyed in the reign of Edward the Sixth. There had been also tables in the church, on which were "depensild the donations and gifts of the founders" as far back as the eleventh century, which Weever could remember reading, but which perished in the fall of the steeple in 1623. The nunnery had become the residence of Sir William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle, and within the Close "Sir Thomas Challoner, Knight, deceased," had built "of late a faire spacious house, upon the frontispiece of which these verses were depensild, now altogether obliterated." (These Latin verses were to the effect that, though the veiled sisters were driven away, Chaste Fidelity remained behind, and honoured Hymen there preserved the marriage vows, and studied in his heart to keep alive the fire on the domestic hearth.) On the other side of the nunnery was the house afterwards occupied for a time by Cromwell. Both these houses were standing at the end of the last century, and Pennant saw them.

Of John Weever himself very little is known besides what he tells us in his book. Fuller knew nothing of him except that he was born somewhere in Lancashire, and educated at Queen's College, Cambridge, where his tutor was Dr. John Person. His native country is known both by the Epitaph he wrote for himself and also from a curious passage in his book, where, speaking of a miracle play, performed in 1409, which lasted eight days, he says, "The subject of this play was the sacred Scriptures from the creation of the world. They call this Corpus

Christi play in my country, which I have seen acted at Preston and Lancaster, and last of all at Kendall, in the beginning of the reigne of King James" (he was then a young man of two-and-twenty), "for which the townsmen were sore troubled, and, upon good reasons, the play was finally suppressed not only there but in all other towns of the Kingdome."

Weever's portrait was published with his book, representing a grave elderly man in a silk cap, with his hand upon a skull. This portrait is rare, most of the copies of the first edition having lost it. He tells us in his "epistle" that he had seen in other countries how carefully the monuments of the dead had been preserved, and had read the epitaphs of Italy, France, Germany, and other nations collected in print "by the paines of Schraderus, Chytraeus, Swertius, and other foreign writers." (Of these old-world and forgotten authors, I am totally ignorant of the first, Schraderus; the second, Chytraeus, is not to be confounded with David Chytraeus, an eminent Lutheran divine, but was named Nathan, and published many books, and among them *Variorum in Europa Itinerum deliciae, seu Inscriptionum Monumenta*, published in 1599; the third, Swertius, I suppose, was Francis Swert, a Flemish historian and antiquary, born at Antwerp 1567 and died 1629.) He had also seen how in England monuments and tombs were, to the shame of his time, "broken downe and utterly almost all ruined, their brazen inscriptions erased, torne away, and pilfered, and that, grieving at this onsufferable injurie offered as well to the living

as the dead, out of the respect I bore to venerable Antiquity and the due regard to continue the remembrance of the defunct to future posteritie, I determined with myself to collect such memorials of the deceased as were remaining as yet undefaced, and to retain the memories of eminent worthy persons entombed or interred within Parish or Abbey Churches; however some of their sepulchres are at this day nowhere to be discerned, neither the bones and ashie remains in any place to be gathered. Whereupon with painfull expenses (which might have been well spared, perhaps you will say) I travelled over the most parts of all England and some part of Scotland." He goes on to tell how much discouragement he met with. How, "having found one or two ancient funerall inscriptions or obliterated Sepulchres in this or that parish church, I have ridden to ten Parish Churches distant from that and found not one. Besides, I have been taken up in divers Churches by the Church wardens of the Parish and not suffered to write the Epitaphs or to take view of the monuments as I much desired; for that I wanted a commission which would greatly have encouraged me (and it still would) as that of Henry the Eighth did John Leyland."

Everywhere was he distressed almost to despair by the wholesale destruction of monuments which had taken place in the last two reigns, in spite of the proclamations of Queen Elizabeth and King James,—“time, the malignity of wicked people, and our English profane tenacitie having quite taken them away for lucre’s sake” (this seems

rather hard on poor old Time). Nor, when his book was finished, was he safe. He apologises for speaking too well of the monastic institutions, and for "concluding the Epitaphs and Funeral inscriptions as I find them engraven with a '*cujus animam propitiatur Deus,*' or with God pardon his soule; which some may say might have beene as well left out of my book, as they are in many cases scraped out of the brasse." It is true he met with pleasures and encouragements. His delight is pleasant to see when he had discovered some fine monument and was able to trace something of its occupant. All antiquities were welcome to him.

Who would not see (he says), if he could with conveniencie, the situation of Silcester in Hampshire, having read in our ancient Historiographers how famous it was in the time of Constantius, the sonne of the great Constantine, and how that our first Christian, worthy King Arthur, was there invested with the Royal Diadem? Howsoever, no marks are at this day remaining to show that ever it was a citie, save a wall of two miles in compasse, containing within fourscore acres of ground divided into seven Corn-fields. . . . The seeing of places we know to have been frequented or inhabited by men whose memory is esteemed or mentioned in Stories doth move and stirr us up as much or more than the hearing of their noble deeds, or reading of their compositions. . . . Considering, then, that the most of men do earnestly desire, Ulysses-like, "*Qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes,*" so all men are as greedily affected to view the sacred sepulchres of worthie famous personages, yea, and the very places where such have been interred, although no Funerall Monument at all be there remaining to continue their memories. . . . What a concourse of people come daily, to view the lively statues and stately monuments in Westminster Abbey, wherein the sacred ashes of the Lord's Anointed, besides other great potentates, are entombed, a sight which brings delight and admiration, and strikes a religious apprehension into the minds of the beholders.

. . . What numbers of Citizens and others at this very time go to Lesnes Abbey in Kent to see some few coffins there lately found in her ruins, wherein are the remaines of such as have been there anciently interred.

Often too he met with unexpected pleasure. Riding along the dull roads, some chance fellow-traveller would prove a delightful and intelligent companion, and relate curious anecdotes and old-world stories, with which he was more pleased than if he had found a pot of gold.

Ryding from Raleigh to Rochford (he says), I happened to have the good companie of a gentleman of the country, who by the way showed me a little hill, and told me of a strange Customerie Court and of long continuance, then yearly kept the next Wednesday after Michaelmas Day, in the night, upon the first cock-crowing, without any kind of light save such as the Heavens will afford. The Steward of the Court writes only with coales, and calleth all such as are bound to appear with as low a voice as possible he may, giving no notice when he goeth to execute his office. Howsoever, he that gives not an answer is deeply amerced; which servile attendance (said he) was imposed at the first upon certain Tenants of divers manors hereabouts, for conspiring in this place and at such unseasonable time to raise a commotion. The title of the Entrie of the Court he had in memory, and writ it down for me when we came to Rochford.

Finally, through all these pleasures and troubles, having brought his work as far towards completion as he ever brought it, he published it from his house in the old Close at Clerkenwell, where was a sun-dial with the motto—

Non aliter perco species quam futilis Umbræ ;

and dying there three years afterwards, was himself taken to a grave in the church there, where a poetical epitaph of twenty-two lines

was placed over him, together with one written by his own hand, and where we will leave him, though perhaps not his book, hoping that the last two lines of his own epitaph were indeed true :

And Christ to me hath given
A home with Him in heaven.

Amid the confused throng of footsteps which crowd the alleys of the past, and amid the maze of forgotten and faded, yet still active existence which fills its long avenues, it is very difficult to find a clue, or to decide which path to take, or which "line of life" to follow first. Centuries of time crowded with individual actions, each individual a life, each life, if we knew it, full of distinct incidents, do indeed open a wide and difficult world of thought and search ; and although only some few fragments comparatively are within our reach, yet these are enough to make the task of selection no easy one, and the path we would follow very difficult to find. It would therefore not perhaps seem unwise, seeing that we have stumbled almost unconsciously upon a clue of some sort in old John Weever's book, that we should follow it for a time, and trust that, though but a by-path, it will in time lead us into some more beaten road, if not into the king's highway itself.

But indeed in some respects this old book is not the worst of guides, especially for us who are seeking to know something of our ancestors personally, and if may be to look them in the

face ; for from the first page to the last it is full of the names and titles of dead men ; and though, in many cases, it is only the names and titles which are actually read in it, yet even these are some tangible realities to grasp, and afford in many ways materials for further inquiry and acquaintance. Nor is it unsuitable, for another reason, for it carries us back as far into the dim distance of our country's history as we shall care to go. We are led back into that woodland England of so many centuries ago which is so different from ours and yet so strangely like—different in so much of exterior life and trappings, like in the familiar and kindred people we find there, and in that "*res angusta domi*" which occupied men as much then as now. We never realise this enough. In imagining the life of the Middle Ages we err two ways : we think of it as too unreal, and yet strangely we do not make sufficient allowance for its romance. On the one side we imagine gloomy and bare castles, with impossible knights, in theatrical attitudes, living the most uncomfortable lives ; on the other, it is hard for us to conceive the real romance—romance in its highest sense—which grew up like wild-flowers along the everyday path. In the first case we deceive ourselves in thinking that the past was more unlike our own times than it really was. For instance, we shall probably find nothing more confidently asserted in popular histories than that there was no middle class of society in the mediæval ages. I can think of no sense in which this is anything like the truth. Except perhaps at some short transition periods of con-

vulsion which are not to be taken into the general view, the class which inhabited the towns, and by which even in the darkest times the necessary handiwork is carried on—the learned classes, the clergy, the physicians, chemists, and lawyers, and a very large portion of the country-gentry and yeomen—formed together a class which exactly corresponded to the middle class now. Indeed, no country could exist as the popular theory asserts was the case in the Middle Ages—that is, without some such class. Impossible nobles grouped about with imaginary peasantry never existed anywhere but on the stage and in some popular histories (these remarks apply particularly to England, but they are true to a great extent of all countries—even of France); and accordingly, when we come really face to face with these times, we find this class in full activity, and find the old familiar ideas and incidents occurring in all ages—not an uninteresting instance of which we find in an early page of Weever's book, where we are reminded that in early times the graveyards and cemeteries were always outside the towns or villages, partly—and here is shown our forefathers' likeness to us—for the greater healthiness, partly—and here is shown their romance, which we have lost—in realisation that all men are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and because of the great sacrifice “offered without the camp.”

Again, we talk as though men's minds had never known a “march of intellect” before our day, and as though no discoveries had ever been made before our modern ones,—as though

formerly no great intellectual emotions ever stirred men's minds, nor humanity ever advanced step by step on great truths and heart-stirring beliefs. What is our "march of intellect" compared to the excitement of those days when the Story of the Cross spread from one end of England to the other like the news of a great victory,—when Paulinus, Bishop of York, baptized in one day ten thousand men, besides women and little children, in the river Swale, by Richmond, the memory of which day caused the stream to be held sacred for ages by the ancient English,—when the effect produced by these great tidings was so great that its influence pervaded all ranks of life ;

so that whenever any of the Clergy or religious person came, he was joyfully received of all men like the servant of God ; his benediction by hand or mouth gladly desired and his admonition gladly hearkened to ; for the clergy used not to come forth but only to preach, to baptize, or to visit the sick ; nor had they any money but cattle, for if they took any money of rich men by and bye they gave it to poor people ; neither was it needful that either money should be gathered or houses provided for the receiving and entertaining of the worshipful and wealthy, who never came then to church but onely to pray and heare the word of God. The King himself, when occasion served to come thither, came accompanied onely with five or sixe persons, and after prayer ended, departed. But if by chance it fortuneed that any of the nobilitie or worshipfull refreshed themselves in the Monasteries, they contented themselves with the religious men's fare and poore pittens, looking for no other cates above the ordinary and daily diet. For then those learned men and rulers of the Church sought not to pamper the paunch but to save the soule ; not to please the world, but to serve God . . . who also at this time were so farre from the infection of covetousnesse and ambition, that they would not take territories and possessions towards the building of Monasteries and erecting of Churches, but

through the earnest suite, and almost forced thereunto by noble and wealthy men of the World; which custome in all points hath remained a long time after in the clergy of Northumberland.¹

But if we leave behind these beatific seasons, which were indeed of too short continuance, were not the great discoveries of chemistry, the recovery of learning, and of the languages of the forgotten classic world, worthy of comparison with the discovery of steam and of the telegraph? and whatever may be said of the theories of Copernicus, Kepler, and Descartes, they were at least equal in proof and interest to the geologic theories of our day. The pursuit of alchemy, with its dreams of another and higher world, and of a common and refining spirit, and of ministering beings, pervading earthly things; the romance of travel, which might then truly be so called; the intense belief of past ages,—surely left the mind but little want of training, nor the soul without the highest intellectual food. The highest truths were familiar, everyday occurrences. The spiritual world, which is so far from us—farther seemingly year by year—was close to them in their very path. What we should call the most romantic things they saw every day, riding by the woodland roads:

A light before me swims,
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns.
Then, by some secret shrine I ride,
My knees are bowed in faith and prayer.

¹ Weever's *Funeral Monuments*, p. 65, quoting Bede, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. iii. chap. xxvi.

I hear a voice—the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair,
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chants resound between.¹

Nothing was commoner than these woodland chapels in solitary places, whence the matin and vesper prayer resounded over the swelling tracts of moor and forest, and if the Sancgreal was not there literally, it was there in fact, and many devout eyes saw it to their endless good.

It is this mingling of familiar and domestic things with what we call romantic which is the life of true romance—the life, that is, of everything that is noble and disinterested as opposed to all that is sordid and mean. All past ages possessed it. I do not mean to assert but that we also may possess it, though it is perhaps more rare now than of yore. Certainly it has been growing rarer every century. In thinking about it, I am encountered with this difficulty. The seventeenth century, though possessing it very much more than the nineteenth does, certainly possessed it very much less than the fourteenth; and yet most persons, and I among them, would consider the seventeenth century infinitely nobler than the fourteenth. Again, there is no doubt that, as we possess it much less than the seventeenth century did, so there are not wanting thinkers who maintain (as I think mistakenly, but who still maintain) that our century is a nobler one than the seventeenth. We are then reduced to one of

¹ These verses are slightly adapted.

these two conclusions—either that the more a man is removed from mean and sordid objects and pursuits, and the more he is placed among beautiful and noble ones, the worse he is; or that I and many others are as much mistaken in believing the seventeenth century nobler than the fourteenth as we believe others to be who assert that our century is nobler than any which have preceded it.

ARS VITAE

Who sees through tears the *masquer's* leap.

THERE is an old word, now fallen entirely into neglect, and perhaps forgotten, which, it seems to me, would supply a want in our modern dictionaries. Some months ago a very admirable essay upon Wit and Humour was read to our Society, in which the subject of the former of those two faculties was treated of in a manner which left, perhaps, nothing to be wished. If the treatment of the latter subject—that of humour—seemed, as it did to me, inadequate, this was neither to be blamed nor to be wondered at, seeing that no writer has yet treated the subject as its importance requires. This chiefly arises from the fact that the faculty, or the art, which at present, for want of a better word, we call humour is growing with the changing condition of human society, and has reached an extension which entitles it to be called a new art, or faculty of the mind, and to have its nature and its limits defined, and a new name given it among men. It is, of course, needless to say that nothing beyond an attempt to direct attention to the subject is intended here.

The word "humour" was not, so far as I am aware, applied by the Romans to the dispositions of the mind, but was confined entirely to certain phenomena of the body; afterwards, the old physicians taught that there were four "humours" in a man: blood, choler, phlegm, and melancholy. Walking, in this respect, in the same steps as modern science, they taught that, as one or other of these "humours" unduly preponderated, the mind and conduct of the man was affected, and in this way a humorist was understood to mean "a man full of humours or conceits"; or, in other words, a man in whom certain habits of thought and conduct had gained such strength as to overshadow the entire man and render him noticeable and singular among his fellows. This sense of the word gradually gave way to another, by which it was understood to mean a man whose bias or habit, itself a humour, took the form of studying the humours of others, and this meaning is probably the one which would seem to most people at the present time to describe what they understand by the word most correctly.

In the increased intellectual activity of modern life, when the field of human action was so much narrowed, and that of human thought so much enlarged, it became evident that the study of human life was nothing but the study of the humours of individual men; and with that increased toleration which follows upon enlarged culture, men began to see that no one man had any reason to assume his superiority to another because his humour differed from his, or because

his fellow's humour appeared uncouth or ridiculous either to himself or to the majority of his neighbours. It also became touchingly apparent that, well considered, nothing in a fellow human being is so truly pathetic¹ as the ludicrous. That which, in a child's puppet, merely raises a thoughtless laugh, assumes altogether a different aspect when seen in one who, whether immortal or a partaker of the Divine Nature or not, is just as much so as the spectator himself, with all his boundless aspirations and reaches of thought. While it does not lose its ludicrous effect, there is superadded to this sense of the ridiculous another of immortality and of pathos; a conjunction producing mental sensation of which the man has hitherto been utterly unconscious, but which, when once he has yielded to its influence, he seldom forgets. Taught, therefore, by the full extent of this insight, it becomes evident that the study of humour is as wide as that of human life itself; for the shadow of death and immortality, which gives to human life its pathos, throws at the same time—by a cross reflection as it were of lights upon a stage—a sense of the ridiculous upon the most solemn pageant—as earthly dignities appear grotesque, and the grimaces of a harlequin-clown pathetic, seen by the ghastly footlights of the tomb.

The word, therefore, which seems to me to be most appropriate to the follower of this study, at such an advanced stage, is that which was

¹ This word is used throughout in its restricted modern meaning for whatever excites the passion or affection of pity.

formerly applied to one skilled in all human learning, viz. "Humanist." That "Enthusiasm of Humanity" applied, by Professor Seeley, to the love of man apart from his circumstances, is at least as applicable to the passion for man *in* his circumstances, and *because* of the detailed and trivial surroundings of his daily life. The motto, "The proper study of mankind is man," is limited in its force when it means, as it has invariably done, the study of his moral nature, and of what he *ought to be* rather than what he *is*. While this life is considered merely as a prison-house, or a stepping-stone, to be escaped from, or to be left, this world may be condemned, but the doctrine of another is also in danger of becoming unreal. It is not till the scene of this life is fully developed that the pageant of a higher can enter upon the stage. If divines had studied this life as earnestly as they have disputed about another, and had shown mankind their own nature in colours they could not fail to recognise (for nothing is so certain of response from the most careless of mankind), they would have been able to present more clearly to their hearers that Divine Excellence which was unknown till it was manifested in humanity. Life as it is, in the dingy streets of our great cities, not as it might be in Utopias and Islands of the Blest,—life in all its forms, with the sorrows and weariness which beset all ranks alike,—is full of magic power to interest and attract. The innumerable fictions which crowd the magazines witness to its force. Among the unpretending walks of religious literature this

power is recognised—doubtless in many instances with good results ; but it is singular that, as we advance in the higher intellectual ranks, this ceases to be the case ; and religious teaching and actual life become more and more estranged ; and this master-chord, to which, touched by the least skilful hand, all other notes respond in tune, remains unstirred.

It is reported of the golden-tongued Chrysostom, that he slept with Aristophanes under his pillow ; and of a Puritan divine, "that he had read many witty authors in the Italian, French, and Spanish tongues, whereof, by the excellency of his wit, he made admirable use even in divinity, he being able, by an holy alchemy, to make everything serve to his powerful persuasions, wherein he excelled." And the Divine Founder of Christianity Himself not only drew His instructions from every form of the human life around Him, but actually omitted the higher application altogether, reserving it for those few whom He considered able to receive it. It is the more important to bear this in mind, because one of the greatest obstacles which Christianity has to encounter from those advanced stages of Indo-European culture which Athens enjoyed, and modern Europe has again reached, is the antagonism between the mental lore of the Semitic and Caucasian races. That higher seriousness, as we consider it, which clothes itself in irony and humour was unknown to the Jews, while the simple grandeur of their literature seems unreal and grandiloquent to the European. The sharply-wrought reasoning

faculty of the Caucasian race, which was first developed in the Greeks, and latterly in most of the different branches of the same great family, finds no encouragement in the Bible. In consequence of this diversity Hebrew is unknown, except to theologians, while the study of Greek becomes a passion to every man of culture who once enters upon it.

It seems, therefore, not unimportant that every influence which serves to graft Christianity more strongly into our intellectual life should be taken advantage of; nor need any timid followers of their Lord shrink from such inquiry; for surely it is a convincing proof of the superiority of Christianity, that, when the exquisite Greek word-science, the brilliant dialectic, the dramatic colouring, the alluring life, the exalted death, the perfect self-sacrifice of the Platonic Socrates had failed altogether to influence the masses of mankind, the religion of Christ, springing from a despised, unlettered people,—from an alien literature, and dressed in nothing that made it attractive to the cultured intellect,—triumphed over the world. The reasons are of absorbing interest, and are not far to seek. They are too long to be considered here, but one of the plainest, perhaps, is that Christ Himself was, in the highest sense to which we have attached the word, a more perfect “Humanist” than any who have hitherto spoken in His most Holy Name.

LATER ESSAYS

THE PLATONISM OF WORDSWORTH.¹

[The reader will perceive that no allusion is made in this Essay to the general religious opinions of the Poet. The writer has simply attempted to trace certain lines of thought which seem to him to exist in Wordsworth's philosophic poetry.]

To write of Wordsworth would seem futile. Wordsworth is himself; to paraphrase or parody his words or characters is unspeakably painful—nay, more, it is useless, it will convey no adequate idea to the man who is ignorant of Wordsworth's poetry. It is the perfection of certain passages which induces the wish to call attention to them, but this perfection leaves nothing to be desired or added; nor can any want of variety be pleaded as an excuse for using any words other than the poet's own. The stage is crowded already. Think of the press of fairy folk who throng upon your memory as you turn over his pages in your recollection—the miller and his maids on their island platform in the river—that strange woman and her no less weird mate beneath the tower of Jedburgh—the stealthy mystic form of the leech-gatherer—the stately march of figures which fill the pathways of “The White Doe”—the valleys and hill-slopes gay with blithe or hallowed with

¹ Read to the Wordsworth Society, July 1881.

solemn figures which delight our fancy in the pages of *The Excursion*—the churchyard where the brother sleeps—the mountain sheepfold where Michael toiled and sorrowed—the foot-plank which bore the last impress of Lucy's feet—the dusty highway along which the Cumberland beggar moved, and will move now for ever—the ghastly fellowship that haunted the prosaic everyday walks of the travelling potter, Peter Bell—Matthew, the schoolmaster, and his mysteriously provoking witty rhymes—Simon Lee—old childless Timothy and the hunt, and that exquisite apologue which genius heard even in the chance echo of the cuckoo's cry—

unsolicited reply
To a babbling wanderer sent.

Wordsworth was a leader of men in the truest sense. On his guidance the jaded and perplexed intellect may safely depend; he possessed a power of cheerful calm, clear as the dawn and unvarying as the stars.

That, when time brings on decay,
Now and then may I possess
Hours of perfect gladness;
Keep the sprightly soul awake,
And have faculties to take
Even from things by sorrow wrought,
Matter for a jocund thought;
Spite of care and spite of grief
To gambol with life's falling leaf.¹

It is the spirit of Paradise,
 . . . a spirit strong,
That gives to all the selfsame bent
Where life is wise and innocent.²

¹ "The Kitten and Falling Leaves," p. 130, Ed. 1849. ² P. 121, Ed. 1849.

It may be that there are lines of thought which the Poet merely indicated, but which it is possible to trace out more clearly, and to follow further on, not only to our own delight and advantage, but also to the appreciation of the Poet.

It has been suggested that one of these lines of thought is the similarity of Wordsworth's teaching to that of Plato. I have said the *similarity* of Wordsworth to Plato, because it is not asserted that Wordsworth consciously Platonised; on the contrary, it is not likely that he ever read the *Dialogues*. It is not impossible that Coleridge may have talked to him upon the matter. We know he discoursed at length to him upon Spinoza, and Sir Frederick Pollock fancies that he can trace the effect of those conversations in the Poet's work.

I should suppose that any ordinarily educated man would, if asked, describe Wordsworth as a poet of nature, and he has with the utmost emphasis described himself as a "worshipper of nature"; nevertheless it would seem that Wordsworth is essentially the poet of *Man*. He is in fact less of a poet than of a Seer. It is *man* whom he chiefly busies himself about. It is the emotions and thoughts of *men* which fill his thoughts. Nature is the type of permanence and reality—man is transient and ever changing; nevertheless nature is ever subservient to man. Seen by man's intellect inanimate nature becomes "an ebbing and a flowing mind."¹ It is intellect projected upon the bleak side of some tall peak "familiar with forgotten years," that gave to it

¹ *The Excursion* : "The Wanderer," p. 447, Ed. 1849.

its "visionary character."¹ It was the transitory nature of the being that stood upon its bank that gave to the flowing stream its lesson of "life continuous—being unimpair'd."² By these forms of nature, "in the relation which they bear to man,"³ are evoked "the spiritual presences of absent things, convoked by knowledge."⁴

Amid the groves, beneath the shadowy hills
The generations are prepared.⁵

Their manners, their enjoyments and pursuits,
Their passions, and their feelings; chiefly those
Essential and eternal in the heart.⁶

But though man consecrates nature, nature elevates man—man and nature act and re-act. That glorious universe, the intelligent succession of conditioned existence, has

meanings which it brought
From years of youth. Which like a Being made
Of many Beings, it has wondrous skill
To blend with knowledge of the years to come;⁷

and thus to lure mankind from a superstitious Manichæism into a state of abiding and gracious calm, in which he is at last able to recognise the eternal unity which pervades all things, the synthesis of thought and matter, the clear dawning of the perfect intellectual day.

'Tis Nature's law
That none, the meanest of created things,
Of forms created the most vile and brute,

¹ P. 449.

³ *Idem*, p. 487.

⁵ *The Excursion*: "The Churchyard," p. 504, Ed. 1849.

⁶ *Idem*: "The Wanderer," p. 449, Ed. 1849.

⁷ *Idem*: "The Wanderer," p. 450, Ed. 1849.

² "Despondency Corrected," p. 482.

⁴ *Idem*, 1st Edition.

The dullest or most noxious, should exist
 Divorced from good—a spirit and pulse of good,
 A life and soul, to every mode of being
 Inseparably link'd.¹

If this is the nature of Wordsworth's poetry, what is the result? He has himself told us that he did not intend to found a system; but the effect produced by his teaching is a sacred peace, in the presence of pure and absolute Being. The petty troubles of existence vanish before the passionless face of nature, and in the presence of invariable Law an entrance is won into the kingdom of the pure Intellect,

by mystery and hope,
 And the first virgin passion of a soul
 Communing with the glorious universe.²

Immutably survive,
 For our support, the measures and the forms,
 Which an abstract intelligence supplies;
 Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.³

Now let us turn for a moment to the banks of the Ilissus and we shall find something of the same character.

Standing under the shady plane-trees, which have long since vanished, groups of earnest-looking young men are discussing those themes which, as the years roll on, generation after generation will discuss; while among them a queer-looking little man whom all reverence, and make way for, and listen to, walks about asking questions, and showing each one of them, to his own satisfaction, how great a fool he is. Plato's dialogues, just as

¹ "The Old Cumberland Beggar," p. 425, Ed. 1849.

² *The Excursion*: "The Wanderer," p. 449, Ed. 1849.

³ *Idem*: "Despondency Corrected," p. 476, Ed. 1849.

much as Wordsworth's poems, form a volume of Philosophical Romance. For his groundwork he seized upon a wonderful and unique man. His philosophy is based upon the story of a life and death, his pages are crowded with men; without the aid of narrative he can create character: but story is not wanting. Anecdote and incident, apologue and poetry, enliven the page. The trials, the difficulties, the follies and aims of men are his theme. Nor does he stop here: his philosophy (transcendental, as it has been called) is human, his ideas are those of earth. Unlike Aristotle and the Schoolmen, he does not occupy himself with Existence, Substance, Attribute, Essence, Eternity, but with matters of everyday life; in the first place destroying false and pedantic notions, and then basing his idealism upon recognised facts, such as love, hatred, strength, and even horses, dogs, and mud.

Let us endeavour to trace this likeness still more clearly by two examples before we attempt to realise the metaphysic result, and the particular mode in which it forced itself on the Poet's imagination, and by which he is still enabled to communicate it to us.

He speaks of

another gift

Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood
 In which the burden of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world
 Is lighten'd: that serene and blessed mood
 In which the affections gently lead us on
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
 And even the motions of our human blood,

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul;
 While, with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony and the deep power of joy
 We see into the life of things.¹

Such an extract as this has said everything that need be said on the subject. It covers all possible ground. Let us remain silent, and turn to the other master:

And what think you would happen were it given to any one to behold beauty itself, clear as the light, pure and undefiled, not daubed with human colouring, nor polluted with human fleshliness, and other kinds of mortal trash; so that, in its singleness of form, he were able to see the beautiful and the godlike in one. Think you that the life of a man would be of little account if he look thitherward (without fear) and has such fellowship as this? Do you not see that to him alone will power be given (who alone has the power to behold the beautiful) to beget, not the deceitful show of virtue, as not being tempted by deceitful shows, but the truth itself as one who embraces a reality:—and so begetting virtue (as a lovely daughter) and bringing her up, it will happen to him to be God-beloved, and, if any man can be, immortal.²

Apart from all the distracting terminology of metaphysic, then, the meaning of the English poet and the Greek philosopher seems to be this: The forces of life, which we call intellectual, may be actually of similar birth with the physical, but phenomenally they stand out in clear distinction. Love, self-sacrifice, and self-denial, courage, and the other virtues, are so far immaterial at least that they are indestructible, invisible, invariable in action, unregulated by the laws which attach to matter. So long as the race endures they are

¹ "Tintern Abbey," p. 260, Ed. 1849.

² Plato, *Symposium*, xxix. E. Ed. Stallbaum.

eternal. But a difficulty seems to present itself at the outset. Love and self-denial, courage and the rest, are all that you state them to be, but so are hatred, revenge, fear, and the like. Will, then, the eternal world of Pure Intellect, which an abstract intelligence has peopled, prove nothing more than a repetition of this?—with all its unintelligible gloom, its perplexities, its cruelties, its Sphinx-riddles, which lead to despair and death?

To grapple with this difficulty Plato fell back upon what may be called a principle of excellence, which rules the formation and government of all animate and inanimate things. What this principle was he was often at a loss to decide, but he appealed boldly to the experience of his hearers to acknowledge that there was such a principle, and to pronounce upon the success or failure of any Work or Being in proportion as it adheres to or departs from it. This being so, it follows that all temporary, accidental, and unsuitable adjuncts being eliminated, nothing but the pure idea of the perfect object will exist in the intellect; so that to the perfectly instructed man there would be no such thing as evil or bad workmanship in the world. Indeed this is really the case in the pure intellect, in which alone all things exist (all things, that is, in their perfect form), and which is God.

The general truth of this, I think, will not be denied. The latest efforts of modern speculation have declared that the world of thought, and that alone, is subjective and objective at once, and that all conceivable attributes turn out to be objective aspects of thought itself. "The ultimate

elements of thought are not merely correlated with the ultimate elements of things: they are the elements of things themselves."¹

Nor is Platonism antagonistic to any older or later form of philosophic thought. You may make matter as eternal as you like. You may deny the argument of design, and conclude that no evidence exists of a Creator, beneficent or otherwise. You may endow matter with such vital energies and such faculties of thought as you may require. You may satisfy yourself that force, or motion, or extension is the immanent cause of all things: but the Platonic theory can never be antiquated or impossible.

From every phenomenon you will always be able to eliminate the transitory and the accidental, until you arrive at an abstract idea which exists only in the pure intellect. It is into this world of ideas that the Platonist forces his way. In this fourth dimension of intellectual space he finds himself in a world familiar and yet wonderful. Into this world neither change, nor corruption, nor decay can enter. This is the true eternal life. Of all earthly things the ideas are eternal, and this pure intellect, this world in which they live and move and have their being, and some portion of which we have each of us received, is none other than the all-perfect, all-containing intellect, the mind of God.

In what way, then, does Wordsworth speak of this world? Under what aspect did its eternal glories present themselves to him? He tells that

¹ *Vide* Sir Fred. Pollock's *Spinoza*, pp. 176-9.

The power
 Of nature, by the gentle agency
 Of natural objects, led me on to feel
 For passions that were not my own, and think
 On man, the heart of man, and human life.¹

How exquisitely the individual mind
 . . . to the external world
 Is fitted, and how exquisitely too
 The external world is fitted to the mind.²

From that bleak tenement
 He many an evening to his distant home
 In solitude returning, saw the hills
 Grow larger in the darkness; all alone
 Beheld the stars come out above his head,
 And travell'd through the wood with no one near,
 To whom he might confess the things he saw.
 So the foundations of his mind were laid
 In such communion, not from terror free.³

While yet a child, and long before his time,
 Had he perceived the presence and the power
 Of greatness: and deep feelings had impress'd
 Great objects on his mind, with portraiture
 And colour so distinct, that on his mind
 They lay like substances, and almost seem'd
 To haunt the bodily sense.⁴

I venture to think that these lines deserve the closest study. They seem to me to contain the key not only to Wordsworth's Platonism, but to that peculiar conception of his that an entrance into the world of abstract thought may be won by the help of material objects.

"The presence and the power of greatness"

¹ "Michael", p. 96, Ed. 1849.

² Preface to *The Excursion*, p. 445., Ed. 1849.

³ *The Excursion*: "The Wanderer," p. 447, Ed. 1849.

⁴ *Idem*, 1st Ed., p. 10.

—this is that “principle of excellence” in which Plato believed. This expression includes all that can be conceived of absolute perfection—of immutable morality, absolute in itself—independent of space and time, of locality and temperament. It includes that power within us which, in Mr. Matthew Arnold’s phrase, “makes for righteousness,”—that consciousness which assures us that, in the Divine Intellect, love must rule and not hatred, confidence and not fear.

By deep feeling, the Poet goes on to tell us, this greatness is impressed upon our mind, so that its attributes lie like substances upon us and haunt the bodily sense. It is evident, I think, that he uses the word “substance” in this place not in the strict metaphysical sense, but in that secondary sense which has vitiated all the terms which express essence or reality, popular use and wont invariably attaching these two last terms to that which is not essential or real. The poet evidently refers to that lower substantiality which belongs to matter, and which is perceived by the senses. He seems to affirm that by the help of the vast objects of nature, perceived in silence and in solitude, we are enabled to understand and to conceive the great realities of abstract thought, and to

breathe in worlds

To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.¹

But in the mountains did he feel his faith;
There did he see the writing—all things there
Breathed immortality, revolving life,
And greatness still revolving;—infinite.

¹ Preface to *The Excursion*.

There littleness was not, the least of things
Seem'd infinite : and there his spirit shaped
Her prospects.¹

This is that "divine hope of pure imagination,"² that "fittest to unutterable thought,"³ "the passing shows of being."⁴

The silence and the calm of mute insensate things.

Where earth and heaven create one imagery.⁵

Matter therefore is a thought of God. The rural gods of Greece would seem to have occupied a similar position in the mind of the Platonist as did these "spiritual presences of absent things,"⁶ "This soul imparted to brute matter," in the poet's "pure imaginative soul."⁷

We live by admiration, hope, and love.⁸

A spirit hung,
Beautiful region ! o'er thy towns and farms,
Statues and temples, and memorial tombs ;
And emanations were perceived ; and acts
Of immortality, in Nature's course,
Exemplified by mysteries, that were felt
As bonds.⁹

The means are not very different, the result is the same. This absolute being is described as including within itself, as the sea its waves, all adoring and conscious and apprehending existence:

¹ *The Excursion* : "The Wanderer," 1st Ed., p. 14.

² *Idem*, p. 497, Ed. 1849.

³ "To H. C., six years old."

⁴ *The Excursion* : "The Wanderer," p. 455, Ed. 1849.

⁵ "To H. C., p. 62."

⁶ "Despondency Corrected," p. 487, Ed. 1849.

⁷ "The Parsonage," p. 523.

⁸ "Despondency Corrected," p. 482.

⁹ *Idem*, p. 482, Ed. 1849.

. . . Life continuous, Being unimpaired,
 That hath been, is, and where it was, and is,
 There shall be—seen, and heard, and felt, and known,
 And recognised—existence unexposed
 To the blind walk of mortal accident ;
 From diminution safe, and weakening age ;
 While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays,
 And countless generations of mankind
 Depart ; and leave no vestige where they trod.¹

Thou, thou alone
 Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits
 Which thou includest, as the sea her waves :
 For adoration thou endur'st ; endure
 For consciousness the motions of thy will ;
 For apprehension those transcendent truths
 Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws
 Even to thy Being's infinite majesty !²

The inborn conscience of humanity has recognised the perfection of Being in a variety of forms—by diverse myths, and it may be grotesque imaginations, at which a misdirected intellect may sneer. The “secret spirit of Humanity”³ has consented with a marvellous unanimity to conceive of a world where wrong is made right, where suffering is turned to joy, where inequality is removed, and the rough places of misery and oppression made smooth—where the poor and the afflicted who have seen or felt little in this life to delight or elevate may find existence somewhat more worthy to be lived. That this blessed consummation may never arrive in the form religionists have dreamed may be true : but that the idea can ever be aught else than true and righteous is impossible.

¹ “Despondency Corrected,” 1st Ed.

² *Idem*, p. 476, Ed. 1849.

³ “The Wanderer,” p. 455, Ed. 1849.

The life where hope and memory are as one,
 Earth quiet and unchanged, the human soul
 Consistent in self-rule, and heaven revealed
 To meditation in that quietness.¹

Miserable indeed would the world become
 were this ideal of righteousness ever entirely lost.

Who in this spirit communes with the forms
 Of nature, who with understanding heart
 Doth know and love such objects as excite
 No morbid passions.²

The light of Love
 Not failing, perseverance from his steps
 Departing not, he shall at length obtain
 The glorious habit by which sense is made
 Subservient still to moral purposes,
 Auxiliar to divine.³

Thus deeply drinking in the soul of things,
 He shall be wise perforce, and while inspired
 By choice, and conscious that the will is free,
 Unswerving shall he move, as if impelled
 By strict necessity, along the path
 Of order and of good. Whate'er he see,
 Whate'er he feel of agency direct,
 Or indirect, shall tend to feed and nurse
 His faculties, shall fix in calmer seats
 Of moral strength, and raise to loftier heights
 Of love divine his intellectual soul.⁴

It would be easy to go on. This synthesis of
 thought and matter is the key-note of every line
 in the poem. But the line of thought has been
 sufficiently laid down ; who will follow it up ?

"He excels," says Jewish proverb, when at
 loss for words of highest praise, "He excels upon
 Sheminith"—the eighth string of the world to

¹ "Despondency," p. 469, Ed. 1849.

² "Despondency Corrected," 1st Ed., p. 195.

³ *Idem*, p. 196.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 197.

come which shall be added to the Kinnor of the Sanctuary when Messiah begins His reign. Listening, weary and sad, amidst the rustling echoes of the *selva selvaggia* of metaphysical tradition, we may catch from these two master-singers, as Dante heard in the stately rhythm of the volume he so long had conned, the clear resonance of this mystical string.

THE HUMOROUS IN LITERATURE ¹

WAS Hamlet a fluke? Is the highest attainment possible to the human intellect "to roll joyously about on a dunghill, thinking no evil?" as was said of Rabelais. Is all consciousness and intention fatal to the highest literature? and is design, driven from theology, to be allowed no resting-place in letters either? Is the quality we call humour the only salt that will keep the memory of a writer fresh for centuries? and, if so, what are the essentials of this surprising quality? Who are the masters in the science of it? Who is the chief priest of its ritual? Is it another name for human life, or is it something apart and partial? Is it a modern faculty and of recent birth, or has mankind always possessed and valued it? Had Shakespeare humour? What was the origin of the word? Did it originate with the surgeons? Did . . . but—Have you any more questions? the startled reader may reasonably ask; and seeing that we may never be able to answer those already propounded, it may be as well, at least for the present, not to ask any more.

Some people probably would make very short

¹ *Macmillan's Magazine*, March 1883, p. 159.

work of some of these questions. It is *not* the highest result of the intellect to roll about on a dunghill, joyously or otherwise. Humour is *not* human life, but only a certain aspect of it, and that not a very elevated one. If I believed this last assertion I should not go on with this paper, but if the sources of this word lie so deep in the realities of life that the highest genius cannot exist without the recognition of its meaning ; if, as the race grows more intellectual, it may be expected to grow more sensitive to the influence of this quality, though its power of achieving it may possibly become less, then it may be worth while to try to clear our minds a little concerning this word, and to settle to our own satisfaction, if possible, what we mean by it.

For it would seem that beneath the masque of the comic actor lie the issues of great controversies, and that the opponents have recognised in the jester's laugh the truest test of what lies at the root of human existence. On the one hand we are asked lugubriously "whether the greatest men," those of deepest and widest outlook—Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Beethoven—have found the world a merry place, or "have been much pleased with life"? No one is so, we are charitably informed, but "children and grown-up children, some of the selfish rich, and a few peculiarly happy natures." On the other hand we hear, "If the great humorist Circumstance proves to be so fond of fun, he must be a benevolent king, and therefore all is well"; we have nothing to do but roll joyously about upon our dunghill. Can it be that Touchstone's

motley garb is the emblem of a solution which will deliver us from these extremes—for extremes are always wrong?

Have men always possessed and valued the quality of humour, and how long have they called it by this word? I have some difficulty in deciding which of these questions to take first, they are both so important. The word is yet scarcely fitted to the quality, yet if the latter be such as we believe it to be, it must have been the most ancient possession of the race. I think we shall find it such, for the humour of Aristophanes is as pure as that of later days and runs upon the same lines—man's folly and far-reaching thought, his littleness and his lofty dreams, his weakness and his power. In the *Plutus* is the germ of Don Quixote and Sancho. In the *Birds* and *Frogs*, human life is played with, amid graceful rhythm and music, with as delicate and genial a touch as Addison's, and with a melody as perfect as Mr. Matthew Arnold's. Much the same may be said for Terence, but the distinguishing quality is not so marked; it is more of the unconscious sort; nor is the medium so delicate and graceful; for it does not follow that because man had not yet learnt to use the word, that there was not even then conscious and unconscious humour.

Now, I think, we must go back again to our first question—Was Hamlet a fluke? for this brings us at once face to face with a question which we must answer—Is genius conscious or unconscious? Speaking of *Werther*, Goethe said that there was an old prejudice that a book

must have a didactic purpose; "a true exhibition of life," he says, "has no such purpose. It neither justifies nor blames, but unfolds ideas and actions in their relations, and thereby teaches and enlightens." In other words, is genius so infinite that intention is contrary to its nature and shows that it is not genius? or, to put it another way, human life is so infinite in its incongruities, in its pathos, in its meanings, and its hopes, that to describe it with the intention and puny vision of a finite being is to destroy its infiniteness and to confuse its delicate lines; whereas, if the artist copies unconsciously the life which is about and before him, he cannot err—the lesson must be read aright.

If this be so, then, the paltriest fact of human existence, the stupidest life of the veriest clown, is more pregnant of truth, more full of teaching, than the maturest thought of the greatest genius, and we cannot shrink from the climax reached in the modern paradox—that the humour of Cervantes, which has to do largely with the unseen and the divine, is *terrene*, while that of Sterne, which never recognises aught save the exigencies of the moment—including an insistent exigence called Death—is derived from the eternal order of things.

But may we not oppose to this brilliant theory, with some show of reason, that intention is necessary to art; that if life be a lesson so easily read by him that runs, wherein is the advantage of letters at all? The careless do not read the lesson of life; it is the function of the true artist, whom we take to be the humorist, to

point the moral, and we say that by the manner in which he does so he shows his skill.

The greatest genius, *qua* genius, that ever wrote undoubtedly lends a vast support to the theory which I am opposing. Indeed it would probably never have been propounded had Shakespeare never lived; for in Shakespeare we find neither consciousness nor intention, nothing but life in infinite variety, fed from the well-springs of human feeling, and ruled by the inevitable forces that keep the issues of life and death. That, when he began *Hamlet*, Shakespeare had no intention of doing more than dramatising a bald story out of Saxo Grammaticus, is probably true; but it surely is a poor compliment to creative genius to assert that it is too stupid to understand a character as it grows under its touch. It will be admitted, I think, by those who have attempted such things, that the most delightful part of their experience is the way in which characters do grow and develop, as it seems, independently of the author. They form their own story, and pursue their own course; but is the author the only person concerned who is not allowed to see this? *Hamlet* became a lesson for all time because Shakespeare, having set himself to write a story with a tragic ending, had the sense to let his character work itself out upon those lines, and those alone, which lead to tragic issues. "It is a text," says Dr. Gervinus, "from true life, and therefore a mine of the profoundest wisdom." That Shakespeare understood the character of Hamlet, and also that such meaning

grew upon him, we seem to have positive proof, from the additions which he afterwards made to the first cast of the play; every one of which, as Dr. Gervinus also says, "assist to a more true understanding of the piece."

But whatever we may say of *Hamlet*, it is certain that the *Quixote* was not a fluke. The one thing which in this, the great masterpiece of humour, is kept before the reader from the first page to the last, is the nobility of this crazed Spanish gentleman, and, what is more, the humour is not only recognised by the author: it is perceived by the characters themselves, as, in real life, people understand the humour of the situation. With an exquisite truth all the *gentlemen* are made to recognise it. There is not a gentleman in the book but, the moment he comes across Don Quixote, recognises not only his worth but the humour of his craze. "Para aquellos que la tenian del humor de Don Quixote era todo esto materia de grandissima risa." "For all those who understood the humour of Don Quixote all this was a matter of infinite laughter." And even those who were not gentlemen, but who as servants were accustomed to associate with gentlemen, saw it. "If this be not a concerted jest," said one of the servants of Don Lewis, "I cannot persuade myself that men of such good understanding as all these are or seem to be, can venture to affirm" such things. The crass stupidity which talked of "laughing Spain's chivalry away" has been, I should hope, sufficiently exposed. On the contrary, "most of his hearers being gentlemen, to whom the use

of arms properly belongs, they listened to him gladly." "Antes como todos los mas eran Cavalleros, á quien son anexas las armas, le escuchiavan de muy buena gana."

I do not contend that Cervantes realised the full extent of his conception : to do so would have been to limit its applicability. He could not, for instance, see the force of the allegory, which grows in import and truth as the years go on, which underlies the story of the liberation of the galley slaves, and it is possible that he may have been unaware of the perfect ending of the whole matter which his genius led him to adopt. He may have pandered to what he supposed was the popular opinion of his hero by making him die repentant and false to the ideal of his life ; but by doing so he did but point with supreme force the allegory and lesson of his wonderful book. Whatever Cervantes may not have intended, or have been conscious of, it is certain that he intended to point out the incongruity of human existence—the contrast of man's highest aspirations with his possibilities—and not, as has been asserted, his "ludicrous futility in his relations to his fellow-man." Man is not futile in such relations ; he is most helpful and competent. It is when he comes into contact with the "universal harmony" that the futility manifests itself. From the first the *Quixote* has been read from these different points of view ; is it possible that some inquiry into the origin of the faculty of humour will enable us to reconcile them ?

The word must have had its birth in Europe, for we have seen that Cervantes uses it in

precisely the same sense that Ben Jonson understands by it.

What does the author of *Every Man out of his Humour* say?—

Why, Humour . . . we thus define it
 To be a quality of ayre or water
 And in itself holds these two qualities
 Moisture and fluxure: as, for demonstration,
 Powre water on this floor, 'twill wet and run
 Likewise the ayre (forc't through a horn, or trumpet)
 Flowes instantly away, and leaves behind
 A kind of dew; and hence we may conclude
 That whatsoe'er hath fluxure, and humiditie,
 As wanting power to contain itself
 Is Humour. So in every humane body
 The Choller, melancholy, flegme, and blood,
 By reason that they flow continually
 In some one part, and are not continent,
 Receive the name of humours. Now thus far
 It may, by metaphor, apply itself
 Unto the general disposition:
 As when some one peculiar quality
 Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw
 All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,
 In their confluxions, all to run one way,
 This may be truly said to be a Humour.

No inkling of the modern sense here. Asper, further on, says—

I go
 To turn an actor, and a Humorist;

but he means nothing more than that he will represent the humours of other men. He charges indeed—

. . . these ignorant well-spoken days

with

Abuse of this word Humour;

so that

if an Idiot
Have but an apish, or phantastic strain,
It is his Humour.

And it may be possible to find a germ of future growth in these last words, for these quotations seem to me of chief value as pointing out that the condition of true humorous thought is individuality.

This assertion receives confirmation from the time when humour began to be consciously talked of, especially in Italy, where Cervantes had lived.

In the Middle Ages, life was too serious for the individual to grow. Thought was epic; its theme was man's greatness, rather than his littleness. It occupied itself with those qualities in which he resembles the gods, not with those in which he resembles nothing save a creature as complex as himself, if such there be. In an age of great ideals the individual is crushed: where all men are of one mind there is no room for humorous eccentricity. The surroundings are stern and oppressive, and the result is a simple character and singleness of eye. The force which was afterwards developed as humour acted in other ways. It spoke out in the arising of chivalry. Europe was regenerated by the enthusiasm for women which was a passion, a humour, of the Germanic tribes. This vital force was overpowered by superstition and the priesthood, and once again it broke out, in very different form, in the Renaissance. There is always this blessed quality in superstition—it

stupefies itself. Life is crippled, defaced, caricatured—a mere torso of humanity as in Rabelais. Then superstition loses its power, and life breaks out once more. The Renaissance was a peculiar manifestation of this force: its ideal was humanity, it developed a new science, humanism, and it culminated in humour.

Human life became individual at the Renaissance, for it was then that man began to realise the certainties of his state and dwelling-place. To this sympathy with, and understanding of, humanity as it is, was added an inheritance which the classic times knew nothing of—the lurid glow of the infinite—a world of emotion and of hope, and of unspeakable possibilities. Men could not forget altogether the ideals of the past centuries. When this new force—this principle of humanism—awoke, with new-born delight, in a world of colour and of form and the recollections of the old humanity, it found itself also in contact with these awful realities, these great beliefs, which once conceived could never be forgotten. Then humanity was seen for the first time in relation to its eternal environment, the unswerving realities of existence by which it is conditioned ; humanity as complete as in the pagan times—the eternal existences as the pagan never saw them. The antithesis was complete, the incongruities of life flashed upon the human consciousness, and humour became a conscious faculty of the brain.

This great brain-wave passed over into England, where the vibration of its note found strings of perfect accord. The sadness and

melancholy of the English humour, vivified and warmed by this brilliant sunbreak from the lands of colour and of pleasure, formed a setting of surpassing mellowness, and elevated and purified the wildness and license of the original birth into a work of perfect, if fantastic, tone. There is something of wonderful grace in this development of the Renaissance spirit in the Shakspearian drama. In Jacques and Touchstone, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, and in Olivia and the Duke in *Twelfth Night*, there is something of Italian courtliness, mingling with the sad, rough phlegm of the English humour, which is peculiarly charming and very curious, especially when found in Shakespeare, usually so reckless in projecting the habits and thought of England into all countries and times. The mere masques and pantomimes which, in the preceding reigns, had wandered over into England by the medium of the French wars, culminate here, in the Elizabethan culture, in this combination of perfect humour, wherein

The wise man's folly is anatomised
Even by the squand'ring glances of the fool.

But our insular dulness was too gross. The English genius kept the humour, but, except for a moment in Addison, lost the grace. The superiority of the English genius, however, is shown by comparing this combination, while it lasted, with the humour of Scarron and Le Sage. The nearest approach to it in these latter writers will be found, I think, in *Le Diable Boiteux*, elevated and relieved as this admirable picture

of a great city is by the beautiful story of the Count de Belfleur.

I have said that the English genius kept the humour while losing the grace. That it did so was greatly owing to peculiar circumstances which favoured the culture of individual character. As in the Middle Ages, the individual had little scope, so in modern centralisation it is again lost. It is, therefore, in the period between these two epochs that we must look for humour, and accordingly it is here, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that we shall find it. The last century was particularly fertile in individual character among all classes of the people. Village life was peculiarly productive of it. The difficulty of locomotion kept people in one place, and undisturbed by constant contact from without, the individual had time and room to expand and grow. Newspapers were unknown, and all men's minds were not modelled into one fashion every morning by the newspaper train. The clergy, the doctors, and many of the gentry, inhabiting the innumerable manor-houses and parsonages that covered the land, carried with them a quaint and original scholarship from universities as yet innocent of the degree grinding-mill. The distinction of classes was much less marked than at present. Domestic service was a friendly and intimate relation. The village lad was constantly rising to the university, by the aid of twenty pounds from the squire. A two days' journey by stage or on horseback was an education in life, with its constant change of companionship, and its study

of character. In the villages, and in cathedral and market towns, all classes lived side by side in friendly and mutual help, and the smiling plenty of the land,—rivers abounding with fish and coverts with game,—which as yet no absorbing central markets tore ruthlessly from the dwellers on the soil, a smokeless sky, and ample leisure, mellowed the human mind, and disposed it towards a genial and gay esteem of life—a striking characteristic of the old civilisation, most inadequately replaced by the tyrannous chatter of to-day.

This village life, with its plenty, its humorous instinct, and its genial neighbourliness is well seen in Sterne, and has been well depicted by the late Lord Lytton, and by one who, within the lines which he set himself, and which he never overpassed, was perhaps the most perfect humorist that ever wrote—Washington Irving. In Hone's *Table Book*¹ there is a sketch of a city worthy, written by Hone himself, but which would do credit to Charles Lamb, which illustrates with distinctness what a fertile source of humour this individuality of character was, and how with such examples around him the humoristic writer naturally grew into existence, and found materials ready to his hand.

The whole nation, familiar with this life, recognised the Shandean humour as true, and it was continued in English literature. Curious and graphic examples of it are to be found, even to a late date, in *Poor Robin's Almanack*, which, started, as is said, by the poet Herrick, himself

¹ Vol. ii. p. 446, ed. 1830.

no mean humorist, was for more than a century the most original of its brethren. But Sterne's humour was only developed by this life; Don Quixote, Sir Roger de Coverley, and Uncle Toby are, alike, the offspring of it. They all correspond to this highest mark of the humorous character—perfection in itself—the ridiculous and pathetic blended into one. It is not enough to depict a ludicrous character and, side by side with it, a pathetic. This is the work of the dramatist but not of the humorist. It must be admitted, I think, that the humour of the *Spectator* is mostly of this character. The effect is produced by the alternation of grave and lively papers, now a lively letter from a rake, then a discourse upon immortality, but in Sir Roger the two are united, as far as each goes, as much as in the highest effort of humorous writing. Sir Roger is, in fact, a mild reproduction of Don Quixote.

Let us turn back in recollection over the pages of the *Spectator*, and see with what a magic touch Mr. Addison brings the world of English life, both of city and country, before us. Mr. Thackeray does not, I venture to think, rise to the full estimate of Addison's work.

"It is as a tatler of small talk that we love him," he says, and "as a spectator of mankind." The last is surely true, but is the first? Addison's talk is never small; his lightest touch, in the description of the slightest fop, has as deep a meaning as his paper upon Westminster Abbey. "In Addison's kind court only minor cases are tried." Indeed! I should have thought that was a "hanging assize" in which the foul

plays were lashed with a withering sarcasm. Addison's humour was permeated with intention and purpose, and with insight into the whole of life.

It is here that he rises immeasurably above Fielding, and here, I think, we again gain a clear insight into the real facts of the unconscious theory with respect to genius. The theory contains much truth, as we have seen, but the chances are that such writers as Fielding are unconscious, because they only see, and can therefore only describe, part of life. *Tom Jones* is nature, but, as Addison said, "nature in its lowest form." Fielding has always gained by being contrasted only with Richardson, and by being opposed by him. Addison was dead; it was fortunate for Fielding that the rapier was rusted, and the skilled hand cold.

Miss Martineau speaks graphically somewhere of an "upright manhood following upon a gallant youth," and Sir Richard Steele, in the *Spectator*, says "a man that is temperate, generous, valiant, chaste, faithful, and honest may at the same time have wit, humour, mirth, good-breeding, and gallantry. While he exerts these latter qualities [for the purpose, Sir Richard means, of filling an agreeable part in play or tale] twenty occasions might be invented to show that he is master of the other noble virtues. Such characters would smite and improve the heart of a man of sense when he is given up to his pleasures." Rather a different ideal this, to the handsome booby, devoid of intellect and of every conceivable virtue, save a certain stupidity which

prevents his being a hypocrite, who drags his tedious and dirty steps through a slough of coarseness and filth. That Fielding could do better, he proved in the character of Amelia, where we get that most exquisite sight—the purity which walks unspotted through evil of every kind.

It has been well pointed out that this contrast forms the *raison d'être* of the obscene in humour.¹ “It arises from an acute apprehension of this great and eternal incongruity of man’s existence—the conflict of a spiritual nature, and such aspirations as man’s, with conditions entirely physical, and perhaps the only truly philosophical definition of the word ‘indecenty’ would be this, ‘a painful and shocking contrast of man’s spiritual with his physical nature.’” Very true! but in order to have this contrast, we must surely have both sides represented in something like equal proportion, and it is worthy of notice that Richard Steele, who may be supposed to have known something about the matter, charges the playwright with being obscene merely because his wit and invention fails. Mr. Traill, one of the charms of whose brilliant monograph is impartiality, will admit that this charge is sometimes true of Sterne.

The *Spectator* shirks no evil—the fopling, the rake, the coquette, the fallen seamstress, the stage at its lowest depths. Old London rises before us with all the sin and all the charm of city life—when cities were inhabited—that life

¹ Article on “English Men of Letters—Sterne,” *Athenæum*, Nov. 18, 1882.

and that humour which Charles Lamb so loved. A few months before his death he writes: "On Wednesday I was a-gadding, Mary gave me a holiday, and I set off to Snow-hill. From Snow-hill I deliberately was marching down with noble Holborn before me, forming in mental cogitation a map of the dear London in prospect, thinking to traverse Wardour Street, etc., when diabolically——" In this love of city life, of this weakness and this purity, all humorists indeed are alike—the realities of life, the petty details, the daily paltriness, the soil and tarnish, the glitter and the taint, the serpent trail even—if these be not the field of humour, then humorists have been wrong.

I have already ventured to differ from Mr. Thackeray in his opinion of Addison. I have also to do so as to Pope and Swift. I fail to detect the slightest humour in Pope; indeed I have sometimes thought that Mr. Thackeray's lecture upon Pope must have been inspired by sly humour itself. How else can we account for his extraordinary enthusiasm for the concluding passage of the *Dunciad*? The artificial satire of Pope seems to be wit, and the savagery of Swift, satire illuminated by wit.

But Mr. Thackeray was not only a writer upon humour. He was the author of one book which will probably in the future stand among the few masterpieces of humour. I mean, of course, *Vanity Fair*. It would be grotesque to dwell upon the excellences of this great work—its life-painting, minute as a photograph yet warm and rounded with all the delicacy of

colour, its crowded canvas, gay and bustling with movement, the reserved strength of its invective, the point of its irony, the power of its narrative, as in the scenes in Belgium, which never drops into mere narrative, but constantly preserves the human character-play, so that it is not the author who narrates, but the real personages of the novel who act—the tremulous change from the comic to the pathetic, and the perfect tone of its pathos. The comic in Thackeray may sometimes drop into caricature as in the schoolmaster, the Rev. Lawrence Veal, but his pathos (unlike that of Dickens) invariably rings clear and true.

It has always seemed to me one of the greatest proofs of the power of this book, that it survived the most painful illustrations with which the author, with a distressing perversity, insisted upon ornamenting it. It is not only that they are badly drawn; they are utterly contrary to the conception which the author had formed of his own characters. The men are broken-down swindlers, the women impossible scarecrows.

But, while fascinated by the brilliancy of *Vanity Fair*, what we have to decide is whether, and in what, it falls short of the very highest perfection. I venture to think that it does so fall short, and that the reason is given on its title-page. It is there called, "A Novel without a Hero." This seems to me to be precisely what it is, and what all Mr. Thackeray's work is; it lacks the ideal. The standard is low even for *Vanity Fair*, but curiously the story is not confined to *Vanity Fair*; if it were, the book

would not be so great as it undoubtedly is. It presents life ; it is conscious of the infinite, but it has no hero. Dobbin is unselfish and noble, but his ideal is Amelia. Constantly spooning after a foolish woman is not the end of existence, and that book which represents it as such cannot take the highest rank as a mirror of human life. Henry Esmond fails in a precisely similar way, but with even less excuse. He sacrifices himself and his country, almost his honour, to a wretched girl, who repeatedly jilts him. In both these lives, the result, even when the coveted end is obtained, is declared by Mr. Thackeray to be vanity. Love even is vanity.

The victor hours scorn
The long result of love.

This is the lesson which Thackeray set himself to teach, with what struck even himself at last as a wearisome iteration, "All is vanity!" It is not true. Life is not vain. There is success before every man, if self-surrender, serenity of mind, and euthanasia be any test of success.

If he who liveth, learning whence woes spring,
Endureth patiently, striving to pay
His utmost debt for ancient evil done
In Love and Truth alway ;

.

He dying—leaveth as the sum of him
A life-count closed, whose ills are dead and quit,
Whose good is quick and mighty, far and near,
So that fruits follow it.

No need hath such to live as ye name life :
That which began in him when he began
Is finished : he hath wrought the purpose through
Of what did make him man. *Light of Asia.*

Thackeray's perfectly successful characters, Major Pendennis, Foker, Barnes Newcome, are all of this type—men without an ideal. George Warrington is perhaps the finest character he ever drew. Colonel Newcome may very fitly be compared to Sir Roger de Coverley. It is a perfectly beautiful creation, and did it occur in *Vanity Fair* would go far to perfect the book; but coming from Mr. Thackeray's pen, it can scarcely fail to strengthen the painful feeling suggested by his good women—that goodness is weak. None of Mr. Thackeray's good women are real; they are so unnaturally foolish. I shall gain no thanks by the assertion, so I make it without hesitation—that the heroine of the exquisite *Story of Elizabeth* is worth all the good women Mr. Thackeray ever drew; and the same may be said of Dolly in *Old Kensington*.

It is this presence of the ideal which perfects the masterpieces of German humour, the result of that outburst of intellectual development which began with Lessing. *Wilhelm Meister* is full of the ideal, so is *Werther* and the *Wahlverwandtschaften*. "Here, as in a burial urn," wrote Goethe of this last, "many a sad experience is buried." Some may hesitate in applying the title of humorist to Goethe at all; but if it be humour to blend with surpassing skill into one life-piece the noble and the frivolous, the simple-hearted and the sarcastic, the pure and the foul, then the genius which has given Philina in the same book that revealed the "secrets of a beautiful soul" ("fair Saint" as Carlyle has chosen to call her), which has created in the

dramatis personæ of the *Lehrjahre* a phantasmal and yet real world of marvellous variety, of gaiety and pathos, has surely conferred upon its possessor the right to be so called.

But it was reserved for Germany to produce in Jean Paul Richter the greatest and most perfect humorist, if we except the author of *Don Quixote*, that the world has yet seen. I doubt even whether Jean Paul does not surpass Cervantes in some respects. I am content to rest this assertion on the fantastic story of the friends Leibgeber, with their whimsical changes of identity and simulated deaths, which begins in *Siebenkäs*, and is completed in *Titan*. The story from the beginning is strangely touching, and full of the deepest humour; but when in *Titan* one of these friends, who now calls himself Schoppe, becomes, as is perhaps not to be wondered at, finally deranged, the psychological interest is intensified with a marvellous power of genius.

Schoppe's madness is of a different kind from that of Don Quixote, or of any enthusiast, and of a far more terrible kind. To the crazed brain of the Spanish gentleman nothing came amiss, nothing disturbed him. Giants might turn into windmills, ladies into peasant girls, and their soft hands into hard cords, but this was only what might be expected to occur in the death struggle in which he was engaged with the powers of evil enchantment and guile. The madness of Schoppe is of that terrible kind which is recognised by its victim; and surely, in the whole range of literature, never has the terrible disease been so perfectly portrayed.

It has been said that the machinery of ventriloquism and jugglery (*diablerie*, in fact) which is introduced into *Titan* impairs its beauty and does not help the development of character; but with this criticism I am quite unable to agree. These fantastic, but quite accountable appearances, the "father of death," the inflated figure carried up to heaven by gas, the complicated machinery which, at the fated moment, animates statues and "hearts without a breast," the Bald-head and his madhouse of wax figures, the forgotten burial-ground in the mystic gardens—all these are not only full of a grotesque humour, but actually exerted a powerful influence upon the characters of the romance. Events such as these, which are laughable or childish to a self-contained mind, are productive of surprising and terrible results when seen through the medium of passion or of disordered intellect. At a certain period of incipient derangement, a very slight apparent violation of the expected and the known is unspeakably terrible, and may upset irrevocably the equilibrium of the mind. When the mind is struggling to retain its hold upon fact, and to do its duty, so to speak, to the real, there is a sense of unspeakable wrong and injustice when the real seems to change its nature and to cease to be depended upon. Were the earth as firm as adamant, he could not keep his step correctly; but when the earth shifts too, when by accident, or the fantastic action of other men, or by villainous design, nature seems to enter into the plot, what becomes of the wretch then?

In Schoppe's case the psychological study is appallingly instructive. The man had chosen

To vary from the kindly race of men,
And pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all.

He had struggled forward after infinite reality beyond the point at which the human brain can maintain its steadiness on the dizzy ridge, and returned crazed and scared from the glance into the pit itself. He had despised the common realities among which man is meant to dwell; he had neglected nature's teaching, which is present in every mouthful of common food by which the brain is fed, and in consequence nothing is real to him. This is the most terrible form of insanity, when the sense of phantasm is present at every moment to the victim. He himself is phantasmal; he is not himself—somewhere among the festivals and village maidens, the pleasant meadows and moist hills and woods of his native land (that blessed sense of moisture which he can never feel), there is another and a happy being, his former self—his sane, his collected self—the self of former years, when love had not given place to irony, nor allowance to sarcasm; the self of boyhood and of youth, when those brilliant guides and thoughts of the mind were fresh and innocent, which have since led him such a wizard's satanic dance. But he is not himself—*what then is he?* Ah, God! should he ever meet that other one, anywhere, face to face!

It is surely a most appropriate function of genial and kindly humour to point such a moral

as this, but it can only be very seldom that a genius arises equal to the dual task. I incline to think that it will be found the most surprising fact in literature that the humorist who had such a childlike, fanciful delight in sunshine and flowers, whose heart melted with love to God and tenderness and sympathy at the sight of every living thing, to whom, not only the very beasts, but the most degraded and repulsive of his fellow-men were dear, could conceive and execute so elaborate and careful a study of a mental course so opposed to his own. It is not a sketch merely; Schoppe's whole life and conversation is before us, worked out in the fullest detail, and we trace step by step the downward course of a nature at the bottom genial and kindly, but whose very geniality is alienated by the want of such quality in others, to whom the sarcastic and the bitter has become the food and sustenance, not the corrective salt of the mind. With its grotesqueness, with its ludicrous side, with its terrific earnestness, with its ghastly terror, its laughter and its tears, this surely must be perfect humour if such can be found.

"Laughter and tears." This brings us back to the old definition of humour, and we begin to ask ourselves what this juxtaposition really means. We read of a certain incident, and we laugh—Why?—because the incident recalls a chain of associated ideas connected with laughter in past years. We read of another incident, or perhaps the same, and we weep—Why?—because the incident now recalls an association of ideas connected with the pleasing melancholy which

results in tears. A delicate and high note is struck when laughter passes into tears; we recognise our own story; the comic, the commonplace, is touched, as it has been some time, surely, with all of us, by a divine emotion; the mystic chord is struck, which is peopled by a magic throng—the sunlit garden of childhood, the first ideal, the remembrance of the dead, the benign influences which stand within the portal, and the kindly ritual of the hearth.

I have said “the pleasing melancholy which results in tears,” for we must decide what tears mean.

One of the greatest of poets, in a most often-quoted line, speaks of

Thoughts which lie too deep for tears.

And another, perhaps equally great, has called such tears as these “idle,” though at the same moment he says that they spring from the

Depths of some divine despair.

Let us think what we mean when we glibly quote these words. What are these things which “lie too deep for tears”?

One thing indeed we know—crushing sorrow—no man ever wept at that. No man ever wept at the apprehension that what was dearest to him would be taken away; nor did he weep even when it was so taken: and none ever wept under a still more terrible visitation, the misgiving at life's lesson, which is despair. The lady who could find no tears for the crushing blow which desolated her life, weeps at the sight of her

infant child. For these crushing sorrows, either of our own or others, are, happily, not part of our daily lives, and have no chords of association connecting them with a happy past. They stand aside, like gaunt Erinnyes, and our heart-strings feel no responsive tremor to their touch.

It would seem, then, that it is these thoughts which do *not* lie too deep for tears with which we have to do; and I think that we shall soon see how near akin is laughter to such genial, beneficent tears. There are many kinds of laughter—the innocent laugh of the child, easily turned, by the bye, to tears; the drunken laugh of the fool—and have we not heard of maudlin tears?—and the laugh of the cynic. In the same way there are different kinds of tears—tears of passion, tears of grief, tears of tenderness. All these have one source, association of idea; the sole difference is in the nature of the idea evoked.

It is a subject that would lead us into discursive paths, but one thing seems pretty certain, that Cervantes' masterpiece, which, at its first appearance, was received with shrieks of laughter, will come in the end to be recognised as one of the saddest books ever written. Can it be possible, then, that the emotion which displays itself sometimes in laughter and sometimes in tears is, in fact, one and the same? When we think over various humorous scenes we begin to wonder where the laughter is. When Don Quixote, believing himself the victim of enchantment, sits steadily through the dark night upon his horse, whose hind legs Sancho has tied to a

tree so that his master may not move forwards to confront the fearful unknown danger in front of them, you may look at the scene through Sancho's eyes even, and I think that on the whole the smile will be faint and the seriousness deep.

For the thoughts which move the nerves of laughter also, the quality of association slightly changed, stir the source of tears. The incongruities of life, when first they strike the mental retina, have the effect of surprise and cause laughter, but, when familiar, are associated with ideas of tenderness which have lain long in deep remembrance. The idea of Don Quixote with his horse's legs tied, strikes the brain of one man as a ludicrous one. He has been accustomed to laugh at such things; the like ideas, as we say, tickle him; this tickling sensation and the consequent laughter are pleasant to him, therefore instinctively he repeats the process. To another man this self-same idea suggests other associations. He has been accustomed to view the realities of life, its incongruities and littlenesses, from the pathetic side, and to derive pleasure from so doing, and curiously this sort of pleasure, acting by association, does not produce laughter. The idea is conveyed to the sensorium as before, but instead of being transmitted thence to the muscles of the mouth it is conveyed to the ducts of the eyes. In the far-off prehistoric age, tears, for some reason unknown to us, became the form by which sorrow was expressed, and consequently that sensibility—what we may call the nerve of tenderness, or what the last century would call

the "tear of sensibility"—which realises thoughts akin to sorrow, takes the same course. "As I am a great lover of mankind," says Mr. Addison, "my heart naturally overflows with pleasure at the sight of a prosperous and happy multitude, insomuch that at any public solemnities I cannot forbear expressing my joy, *with tears that have stolen down my cheeks.*"

These two perceptions of the ludicrous and pathetic, this sympathy with the passing joy of a people to whom sorrow is a familiar guest, is what we mean by perfect humour. It is the most delicate feeling we experience. It is laughter purified, gaiety refined into a joy of tenderness and peace and love—as we frequently observe a joyful cheerfulness among people who have known sorrow. For tenderness and sympathy, being the highest joy, take the same form of expression as the sorrow which is their source and sustenance; and so completely is this the case that it is scarcely an hyperbole to say that in a perfectly joyful world there would be no such thing as joy.

There is still one question before us. If humour be what we have claimed for it, not mere farce but a depicting of the whole of human life, then we should expect that the highest literature should be found to contain it. We should expect to find it everywhere—that it should satisfy all that desire which a reading in theology, or philosophy, or science, or history, or a study in art has created in man. Are there then any great books, or still more any great forces of human life which seem devoid of it? Is there

any humour in the Gospels? This is a dilemma that must be faced, for if humour be life itself, how can human life in its highest development dispense with it?

In the sixty-eighth *Spectator*, Addison says, speaking of the son of Sirach, "with what strokes of Nature, I had almost said of Humour, has he described a treacherous friend." If humour is nature then,—if the laughter in it is only a preliminary step to the seriousness which is the highest joy, to that joy which Mr. Addison says he could not forbear expressing by tears at the sight of the solemnities and enjoyments of men,—then we may remember that though it is true that there is no laughter in the story of the Cross, yet this familiar phrase reminds us that it was by *story* that the world was won to God; and, if words mean anything, we must mean by this, that it was because mankind recognised its own nature in the preaching of the life and death of Jesus that it was attracted by it. One of the many brilliant epigrams with which Mr. Matthew Arnold has enriched the language, is that in which he describes religion as "conduct touched by emotion." It was the emotion born of the daily relations of human life which men found satisfied in the story of Jesus Christ, for the patient tendency of a slow development had prepared men to recognise the kind of God of which they had need; and, from the beginning of the race, forces were working to this end, which deserve scientific examination as much as any that at present occupy the attention of the physical schools. The origin of all religion is

in the needs and incidents of daily life. All emotion—that is, all love and passion,—springs from the same source. No form of religion ever succeeded which did not spring from these incidents, which did not pretend at least to satisfy these needs.

It was no new idea that God should take upon Him the form of man. Beginning probably with a healthy enjoyment of the beauty of life, men formed the conception that the gods themselves must desire to share it. But, as the sorrowful predominates in most lives, this idea grew imperceptibly into a nobler one, that the God became incarnate to bring healing and help. This was the form which the cultus of Apollo took among the Greeks, and at last, in the Scandinavian Balder, we get the idea that the God was incarnate and then died.

In these, and such as these, the notion was of a God—great and glorious—but the preachers of the Cross told, indeed, of a Healer, but of a rejected Healer. They told of a houseless wanderer, of harlots and sinners, of shepherds and sowers and fishermen, of the wine-press and vine-dressers, of father and mother and of family life, of marriage and festival, of the bridegroom and his friend. They spoke of suffering and of failure and of unrecognised death. Then men saw in all this something different from the bright sun-god of the Hellenes, or the fated Balder of the chivalrous north, and said with whispered breath to themselves and to each other, "This is the God we need." And the same magic is working to the present day. The

book which, in the present century, has had the greatest sale of all others is John Keble's *Christian Year*, and why? Because, across the poetic *Fantaisie*¹ of flowers and woods and winds and hills, we trace the passion-play of a suffering, self-denying life and death. The footsteps of the God are upon earth and among earthly things

. . . beside our paths and homes,
Our paths of sin, our homes of sorrow.

And if *His* feet are torn and bleeding by the roughness of the way, the purple stains upon the flower tissues that form our home-garlands prove only that we are His kin.

But is it true that there is no humour in the Gospels? "What strokes of nature, if not of humour," to use Mr. Addison's words again, may we find in the story, let us say, of the prodigal son? What, in the light of the modern conception of humour, will come out of this?

Here, surely, there is no want of real life—of low life, even. Here is a wild young scamp, as like Tom Jones as heart could wish. Here is ingratitude, forgetfulness of parents, riotous living, taverns, harlots, what not? Then beggary and feeding swine and living upon husks. Then, when evil living is found not to answer, penitence—like Tom Jones again.

And "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him," along the stony road beneath the vine-clad hills. Who can tell us how often the father's eyes had gazed longingly down the road since his son's figure, gay, reckless of the

¹ "Fantaisie" is the name of a prince's garden in Jean Paul.

benefits just bestowed, accompanied by servants, eager for the pleasures of the world, had vanished from his sight? Now, at last, after so long waiting and looking, he sees, in the far distance, a very different sight. He sees a solitary figure, worn and bent down, in rags, dragging on its weary steps. How could the old man's gaze expect such a sight as this? Nevertheless, his father knew him, "and ran and fell on his neck." He did not wait for any accents of repentance, nor did he enforce any moral precepts which might advantage posterity. "He fell on his neck, and kissed him." Foolish old father!

Tom Jones is brought in. He goes to the bath. The familiar feeling of luxury comes over him once more. He is clothed in fine linen and has a gold ring placed upon his finger; the past seems an evil dream. Then the fatted calf is killed. The banquet is spread, and there is festivity, music, and dancing-girls.

But, suddenly, in the midst of his delight, some trouble passes over the old man's face; his eldest son is not in his place, and they bring him word that he is without, and refuses to come in. Some perception of a neglected truth passes through the father's mind; he rises and goes out—"Therefore came his father out and entreated him."

The eldest son had been out all day working in the vineyards: all his life had been one long performance of duty, taken for granted, and, therefore, unpraised and unrecognised. In how many households will silent witness be borne that this is real life—the gentle and obedient

service overlooked—nay, more than this, the cross word or hasty temper vented where there is no fear that it will be returned.

“All these years have I served thee . . . and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” I am a man like others; gaiety and feasting are pleasant to me, as to them.

A look of perplexed but growing insight comes into the father's face. “Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.”

This is all very well; still he is conscious that there is something to be said for the eldest son, too. But his lost son—his wayward, and therefore loved, son—is come again.

“It is meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again.” We can see the pitiful, pleading look in the old man's eyes—“thy *brother* was dead!”

Yes, Addison must be right. Nature and humour cannot be far apart. The source and spring of humour is human life. Its charm consists not merely in laughter, or even in joy, but in the stirring of those sympathies and associations which exist invariably in the race, for we inherit a world-life and a religion, the earth-springs of whose realities lie, perchance, too deep for laughter, but not, Heaven be thanked, too deep for tears.

GOLDEN THOUGHTS FROM THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE¹

AFTER the *Life of Molinos*, and before the reader forms an acquaintance with Molinos himself, my part in this little volume would seem to be small. There remains, indeed, only to give thanks for these—

Words of blessing and of peace.

For though here and there in this little book some things may strike us as hard sayings, yet it seems to me that this message from a foreign country and a bygone age is not without a singular appropriateness at the present time, when the inquiring intellect is so much in the ascendant, and the soundings have become strange, and the old landmarks dim in the ever seething mist. For this "Method of Molinos" deals with an experience of the mind which is utterly unaffected by any of the controversies which trouble the Christian Church in these days. The faith of which he speaks is not a faith in a series of events or in any schemes of dogma, however important or useful such faith may be (and I for one believe it to be very important),

¹ Preface to *Golden Thoughts from the Spiritual Guide of Miguel Molinos, the Quietest*. D. Bryce & Son, 1883.

but the faith of which he speaks is faith in an eternal principle—in that awful yet gracious Presence, by whatever name we choose to call it—the sense in every one of us of purity and peace, of righteousness and love and power; of that Plastic Force, in short, which “inhabiteth eternity,” with which the universe is instinct, and in which benign and intelligent energy some of us still recognise a Personal God.

When we enter with Molinos into the mystical state of “internal recollection and silence,” we leave behind us all the perplexing questions by which religious life in the present day is disturbed. These things “cease from troubling,” we find ourselves face to face with the Eternal and Ideal, and we lie still and passive if so be that He may work His gracious will on us. Is not this a blessed change from jangling and contention, from doubt and distress? And, indeed, when we come to think of it, it would seem not so strange a thing to ask that, when we think of all the blessings which we have inherited and received, “those which we have forgotten and those which we cherish in our memories and feel in our hearts,” and of this crowning blessing by which humanity is raised to the Ideal, and the imperfect love of the least of us is made partaker, and in some sense even the pattern, of the Divine Love—when we think of the blessing which such thoughts as these have brought to the most sorrowful and careworn life—is it so strange that we should sometimes think it possible that we might all of us, with all our differences and estrangements, in this one thing united as children

of a common Father, "evermore give thanks unto Him in His Holy Church"?

For the extracts from Molinos' book which are here given are only part of his Method, and relate only to that portion which belongs to the Mystical Theology. Molinos' Method consisted in the uniting of this spiritual experience and training with the system and worship of the Church Catholic; and this ought not to have been found so difficult, for if we will think for a moment, we shall see that this method of the soul's training in mystical worship is, in fact, conceived in the purest spirit of that Sacramentalism, which has nothing to do with priest-craft, and is the basis of that idea of the Church which all its abuses in all ages, so far from creating, have only impeded and obscured. The "prayer of silence," the "spiritual martyrdom," the "mystical peace," the "entrance into internal recollection through the most Holy Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ," are all the offspring of the Sacramental principle which finds an utterance in outward fact, in formal and ceremonious usage, and not in human intellect and speech, is nowhere so clearly seen as in the worship of the Church Catholic in its purest form, and could nowhere, so Molinos insisted, more surely be expected than in the Communion of the constituent parts of that Holy Humanity, the Precious Body and Blood.

The brazen gates are closed behind us which shut out the fantastic throng of troublous and distracting thoughts; above and around us, in the windows and on the walls, are saints and

apostles, martyrs, servants, and seers who have endured to the end ; sense is there, but it is sense in its ideal entirety, not the erring and wandering sense of perplexed Humanity ; melodious sound is there, but inarticulate, or, if articulate, in the hallowed words of centuries, which have lost the note of finite utterance and become universal as silence itself ; form is there, but form hallowed and mystical, without choice or alternative, without growth and without decay ; and before the adoring individual sense, thus chastened and annihilated, is presented the God-given Humanity as God Himself restored it, and offered it before the universe as a sacrifice again.

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE ¹

(*Nineteenth Century*, May 1884.)

THE publication of this book has been expected with eagerness, and it is not surprising that such has been the case. It is just twelve years since a unique personality passed away from among men ; a name which had occupied a most prominent place in the world of thought and of controversy ceased to appear any longer as that of a contemporary, and a voice was silent which, within a certain range at least, had stirred the heart and spirit as no voice in modern times had ever done. If any surprise were expressed, it would almost seem to be caused by the patience with which the absence of any biography of Mr. Maurice has been borne ; but the reason of this is, I think, not far to seek. Those who knew Mr. Maurice, either personally or by his writings, knew him so well—his presence was so constant, and his thoughts and convictions were so real to them, and had become so perfectly their own—that they felt less the need of a biography than in the case of almost any other man.

I am inclined to think, however, that all feeling of indifference will be exchanged for enthusiasm

¹ *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*. Edited by his son Frederick Maurice (London : Macmillan and Co. 1884).

when the present volumes are perused, for, if the subject of the biography was unique, the work itself may, I think, be said to be unique also. It cannot be said to be an autobiography, for no autobiography could possibly be so spontaneous, or have contented itself so exclusively with thought and opinion ; but for this very reason it is not so much a book at all as it is Mr. Maurice himself, not perhaps in the flesh, but certainly in the spirit. The book is unique in the position and circumstances of its editor, and it has been produced upon principles of candour and personal abnegation which, if not unique, are at least infrequent. Few biographers have said less about their subject than Colonel Maurice has said about his father, and few have allowed their subject to speak so largely and unreservedly. Colonel Maurice says in his Preface : " Nothing whatever has been kept back or concealed as to my father. My sole object has been to present him as he was." The question whether letters do represent a man is one which must, I think, be decided afresh in each individual case ; but, *cæteris paribus*, no one can be so good a judge of this as a son can be, because he has fuller opportunities of knowing how far the private life corresponds to the public, and he is less liable to be biassed in his judgment by party or theological prejudice. Where Colonel Maurice has departed from his usual method, as in chapter viii. of the second volume, the result is so charming as to make us wish for more personal reminiscences. The candour with which the letters and extracts of letters have been given to us is remarkable,

extending, I should say, in a few instances, to the publication of what Mr. Maurice himself would have suppressed. To some of those who have only known Mr. Maurice in his books, it is possible that some of these letters, written under circumstances of excitement and impulse, will convey an impression of unrest and anxiety foreign to the serene result to which, in the sermons, thought and experience had given a prophetic calm ; but we shall all feel the privilege of being thus admitted into the workshop of the mind, obtaining, I think, by such means, as true, as vivid, and as detailed a presentment of the personality which it is our wish to realise as we could with any reasonableness expect.

His biographer says that Maurice's position was unique. I conceive that Mr. Maurice himself was absolutely unique. I conceive that no other man ever occupied his precise mental standpoint, for he combined two qualities which are generally found to be incompatible—he united an almost perfect freedom and toleration of thought with the most entire certitude of conviction and teaching. It was this quality beyond every other which made him emphatically the teacher of teachers ; for a teacher who attracted the freest and most acute intellects by his sympathy with their doubts and speculations, believing, as he did, that God's guidance was to be perceived not so much in men's opinions and conclusions as in their struggles and questionings and glimpses of light (vol. ii. p. 338), and at the same time appeared possessed of a certitude at least equal to that of the narrowest dogmatist, could not fail to command an influence

over thinking men. It is easy for a man who has not to teach to assume a generous breadth and freedom of opinion; but it is obvious that the teacher must have something to teach, and must have arrived at some point of certitude from which, as from a rock, he can draw up his hearers from among the waves of perplexity and unrest. This was what emphatically Mr. Maurice did.

There is, however, another point in Mr. Maurice's character which I think well to touch upon here at the outset as giving a note most important to be struck thus early—I mean his saintliness. "He was the only saint I ever knew," was said to me the other day by one well known in letters and in society; "others have aimed at it. He was a saint." Dr. Goodeve, of Clifton, his cousin, the companion of his boyhood, says of him (vol. i. p. 38):

He was the gentlest, most docile and affectionate of creatures; but he was equally earnest in what he believed to be right and energetic in the pursuit of his views. It may be thought an extravagant assertion, a mere formal tribute to a deceased friend and companion, but, after a long and intimate experience of the world, I can say with all sincerity that he was the most saint-like individual I ever met—*Christ-like*, if I dare to use the word.

I wish thus early to insist upon this, because I have no doubt that to a character of this description only that secret is entrusted which becomes the method of attraction which Mr. Maurice possessed. Others may have been holy as he was, though I think they have been few; but none could have possessed his attraction, however gifted with like gifts, save the holy, for

he himself would tell us that none but the pure can see God, and the secret of his certitude and of his charm was that he had seen God.

"I was sent into the world," he writes to his son, in one of his carefully prepared autobiographical letters—"I was sent into the world that I might persuade men to recognise Christ as the centre of their fellowship with each other, so that they might be united in their families, their countries, and as men, not in schools and factions"; that is, as I understand him, the bond of interest and union is not opinion, but that humanity which has been taken up into God.

Very early in life, in the little Quaker village of Frenchay, with its quiet greens and leafy parks, it was borne in upon the mind of this exceptional boy that there was nothing strange or exceptional in his circumstances, but that he "*was one of a race.*" This, undoubtedly, is the key-note of Mr. Maurice's teaching to the end of his life—not children by election or adoption; not disciples or followers by choice or opinion, but children by natural birth, elect in virtue of the common humanity by which alone every human being is the son of God. The distinction between his view of baptism and Dr. Pusey's was just this: the latter regarded baptism as a change of nature; he saw in it the coming out of the infant into the first radiance of a light which had been ever shining for it and for all the world.

In the very remarkable mental atmosphere in which the boy grew up, amid those religious questionings which led to the entire family of the Unitarian minister leaving their husband and

father to follow other forms of faith, it was perhaps natural that, to such a mind, this principle should be strengthened, if indeed it was not suggested; for a craving would arise in an affectionate and susceptible nature for some other bond of union than that of mere opinion. When, after many discussions, he went to Cambridge, he came under the influence of a remarkable man in a very characteristic way. In a most interesting extract from his own papers, he gives an account of Julius Hare's lectures during two terms, first upon the *Antigone* of Sophocles, and secondly upon the *Gorgias* of Plato. Hare himself wrote of him "that there was in his classroom a pupil whose metaphysical powers were among the greatest he had ever come in contact with, but that the man was so shy that it was almost impossible to know him." Entirely unknown to the man who was afterwards to be his intimate friend and brother, this was what was passing in the boy's mind (he was eighteen):—

I *do* recollect Hare's classroom exceedingly well. I am often surprised how clearly all the particulars of what passed in it come back to me, when so much else that I should like to preserve has faded away.

You will suppose, perhaps, that this was owing to some novelty in his method of teaching. You will inquire whether he assumed more of a professional air than is common in a College, and gave disquisitions instead of calling on his pupils to construe a book? Not the least. We construed just as they did elsewhere. I do not remember his indulging in a single *excursus*. The subject in our first term was the *Antigone* of Sophocles. . . .

We hammered at the words and at the sense. The lecturer seemed most anxious to impress us with the feeling that there was no road to the sense which did not go through the words.

He took infinite pains to make us understand the force of nouns, verbs, particles, and the grammar of the sentences. We often spent an hour on the strophe or antistrophe of a chorus. . . .

If there had been disquisitions about the Greek love of beauty, about the classical and romantic schools, and so forth, I should have been greatly delighted. I should have rushed forth to retail to my friends what I had heard, or have discussed it, and refuted it as long as they would listen to my nonsense. What we did and heard in the lecture-room could not be turned to this account. One could not get the handy phrase one wished about Greek ideals and poetical unity; but, by some means or other, one rose to the apprehension that the poem *had* a unity in it, and that the poet *was* pursuing an ideal, and that the unity was not created by him, but perceived by him, and that the ideal was not a phantom, but something which must have had a most real effect upon himself, his age, and his country. I cannot the least tell you how Hare imparted this conviction to me; I only know that I acquired it, and could trace it very directly to his method of teaching. I do not suppose that he had deliberately invented a method; in form, as I have said, he was adapting himself exactly to the practice of English Colleges; in spirit, he was following the course which a cultivated man, thoroughly in earnest to give his pupils the advantage of his cultivation, and not ambitious of displaying himself, would fall into. Yet I have often thought since, that if the genius of Bacon is, as I trust it is and always will be, the tutelary one of Trinity, its influence was scarcely more felt in the scientific lecture-rooms than in this classical one; we were, just as much as the students of natural philosophy, feeling our way from particulars to universals, from facts to principles.

One felt this method, without exactly understanding it, in reading our Greek play. The next term it came much more distinctly before us. Then we were reading the *Gorgias* of Plato. But here, again, the lecturer was not tempted for an instant to spoil us of the good which Plato could do us by talking to us about him, instead of reading him with us. There was no *résumé* of his philosophy, no elaborate comparison of him with Aristotle, or with any of the moderns. Our business was with a single dialogue; we were to follow that through its windings, and to find out by degrees, if we could, what the writer was driving at, instead of being told beforehand.

I cannot recollect that he ever spoke to us of Schleiermacher, whose translations were, I suppose, published at that time ; if they were, he had certainly read them ; but his anxiety seemed to be that Plato should explain himself to us, and should help to explain us to ourselves. Whatever he could do to further this end, by bringing his reading and scholarship to bear upon the illustration of the text, by throwing out hints as to the course the dialogue was taking, by exhibiting his own fervent interest in Plato and his belief of the high purpose he was aiming at, he did. But to give us second-hand reports, though they were ever so excellent—to save us the trouble of thinking—to supply us with a moral, instead of showing us how we might find it, not only in the book but in our hearts, this was clearly not his intention.

Then Mr. Maurice goes on to say that Hare first set before his pupils

an ideal not for a few "religious" people, but for all mankind, which can lift men out of the sin which "assumes selfishness as the basis of all actions and life" ; and secondly, the teaching them that "there is a way out of party opinions which is not a compromise between them, but which is implied in both, and of which each is bearing witness." "Hare did not tell us this. . . . Plato himself does not say it ; he makes us feel it."

I do not apologise for the length of these extracts : they are so interesting in themselves, and are so intensely valuable as showing the forces that were at work in the boy's mind. "The most enlightened men in Germany, France, and England," he wrote afterwards, "are acknowledging the deep obligation which they have owed to Plato for having enfranchised them from systems, and sent them to seek for wisdom, not in the strife of parties, but in the quiet of their own hearts." "Maurice says," writes his pupil, Edward Strachey, to Lady Louis—"Maurice says all little children are Platonists" ; and we know of Another who said

that only as little children could we enter the kingdom of God. It was through this portal, then, that young Maurice, like so many others, entered into intellectual life.

On leaving Cambridge, not having made up his mind to the required subscription to the 36th canon, he took his name off the University books, without taking a degree, declining the kindly suggestion of the Senior Tutor of his College that he should allow the full term of five years' standing to expire before taking so decisive a step. Whatever his future opinions might be, he characteristically said he could not hazard their being influenced by any considerations of worldly interest. During his stay in London, where he wrote for and finally edited the *Athenæum*, during an interval at home during which he wrote his novel, *Eustace Conway*, and at Exeter College, Oxford, to which college he was attracted by the kindness of Dr. Jacobson, he was gradually forming those convictions which resulted in his taking orders in the English Church, of which, I imagine, it would be difficult to find a more ardent or a more thorough adherent than he became.

I have agreed with Colonel Maurice that his father's position with regard to the Church was unique, but in addition to this I should not hesitate to say that at first sight it seems, and all through his life it did seem, intensely subtle: so much so that he himself could scarcely expect it to be grasped by religious people of ordinary calibre; still further, I am not ashamed to admit that it has often appeared to me so subtle that I have failed for some time altogether to grasp it; nevertheless

I am perfectly certain that it was of the simplest description. We have seen that Mr. Maurice's idea of God was that of a God of the natural human race. He conceived of a living God, the Author, Origin, and Support of the race—a God who in all ages had not only been speaking to it, but had been living in it, teaching, leading, drawing it to Himself—a God who was doing this now as much as ever. In the Hebrew Scriptures he found the fullest and clearest proof and exposition of this immortal fact. He believed, with his whole heart, in the existence of this ceaseless Energy, this unwearying Love and Power. He believed, also with his whole heart, that the English Church, in its formularies, in its Articles, in its Liturgy, in its Creeds, literally, and in the plain and ordinary English interpretation of the words, inculcated this truth; just as the English translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, in their literal sense, also inculcated it. “The errors of the Oxford Tracts,” *i.e.* of the High Church movement, he wrote to Edward Strachey,

consist, I think in opposing to “τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου” (the spirit of the present age) the spirit of a former age, instead of the ever-living and acting Spirit of God, of which the spirit of each age is, at once, the adversary and the parody. The childlike spirit of the Fathers, say they, must be brought in to counteract the intellectual spirit of these times—the spirit of submission to Church authority against the spirit of voluntary association.

It was not that he objected to the spirit of the Fathers—so far from it, he was most deeply read in and conversant with them, especially with St. Augustine—but their utterance was not that ever-

living and acting Spirit to which he believed the formularies of the English Church bore witness, and any slighting or crippling or ignoring of which Spirit he believed to be heresy against such formularies and articles.

Now this ever-living and acting Spirit of God pervades the whole human race, absorbing all its functions into Himself, so that, as in the old Jewish times, king and priest and prophet were the instrument and mouthpiece of this Spirit, so now king and state and commonwealth are as much, and no more, manifestations of this Spirit as the Church itself. There is no power whatever but that of God; all else is mere lawlessness and anarchy. So far as the democracy declared itself absolute, he opposed it to the death, but he would have been the first to recognise in the most stifled outcry of a democracy the voice of God proclaiming, as by the wild cry of a gaunt and ragged prophet by the wayside, wrath and future judgment against the selfishness and atheism of kings and states. So far as the sectaries set themselves up against the visible unity of the one Kingdom and Church of God—so far he would have been the first to recognise the side of truth each of them had grasped, as a witness against the error and backsliding of the Church. “I write *of* Quakers,” he says, “but I write *to* Church people.”

I will quote a passage from the *Prophets and Kings*, partly because of its extreme beauty, but chiefly because it explains, more than any other word could do, this simple and clear

position as to the relations of Church and State :—

We have been hearing of a Vision. Does that word sound as if it belonged to times which we have left far behind, as if it pointed to something fantastical and incredible? Oh! if there were no such visions, brethren, what an utterly dark and weary and unintelligible place this world would be! How completely we should be given up to the emptiest phantoms, to the basest worship of phantoms! What mere shows and mockeries would the state and ceremonial of kings, the debates of legislators, the yearnings and struggles of people, become! How truly would the earth be what it seemed to the worn-out misanthropical libertine, “a stage, and all the men and women merely players”; a thousand times we have been all tempted to think it so. The same painted scenery, the same shifting pageants, the same unreal words spoken through different masks by counterfeit voices, the same plots which seem never to be unravelled: what does it all mean? How do men endure the ceaseless change, the dull monotony? Satirists and keen observers of the world’s follies have asked this question again and again. The best man may often doubt what he should reply. But he hears a voice saying to him, “Try to be true to thyself; resist the powers which are tempting thee to go through thy acts, common or sacred, as if thou wert a mere machine; hold fast thy faith that God is, and is working, when thou seest least of this working, and when the world seems most to be going on without Him; assure thyself that there is an order in the universe when all its movements seem most disorderly. So will the things around thee by degrees acquire a meaning and a purpose. Those divine services and sacraments which have partaken of their insincerity, which have become shadows like them, will show thee what a truth and substance lies behind them. In English temples thou mayst hear ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts,’ resounding from the lips of seraphim. In them thou mayest know that thou art in the midst of a company of angels and archangels and just men made perfect; nay, that thou art in the presence of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and of God, the Judge of all. And if the sense of that presence awaken all the consciousness of thine own evil, and of the evil of the people among whom thou dwellest,

the taste of that sacrifice, which was once offered for thee and for all the world, will purge thine iniquity. When that divine love has kindled thy flagging and perishing thoughts and hopes, thou mayest learn that God can use thee to bear the tidings of His love and righteousness to a sense-bound land that is bowing to silver and gold, to horses and chariots. And if there should come a convulsion in that land, such as neither thou nor thy fathers have known, be sure that it signifies the removal of such things as can be shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”¹

Now, if his position is so simple and so orthodox as it appears to be—and I think the fact cannot be disputed—how is it that Mr. Maurice’s mental and doctrinal standpoint appeared so subtle and obscure? how was it that he seemed to be constantly contradicting and disappointing the expectations of simple-minded people? and how is it that this man, who was by every possibility of expression the most orthodox of Churchmen and the most unswerving of believers in the inspiration of the Bible, should have left his name as a by-word among a large and varied class of Church people, for a monster of heresy and misbelief? The question seems to me full of interest both as it relates to peculiarities of character and of the times, and illustrates some traits of our common nature which are alike in all times.

Some reflection on Mr. Maurice’s principle of interpretation of Scripture, if so simple a process can be called by such a name, will, I think, assist us in this perplexity. His faith in the letter of Scripture was entire. “If the Bible shrank from difficulties,” he said, “if it had not a stronger

¹ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 234.

evidence in itself than all the ingenuity of apologists could supply, it was not the book which I took it to be—it had not the power for which I gave it credit.” The absence of all difficulty, the ease with which obstacles apparently insurmountable are overcome, give the reader at first a sense of amused surprise, as though some ingenious casuistry or legerdemain was at work; but this is only because we are so unused to his plain and simple principles. We are so accustomed to difficulties and apologies and German criticism and to etymological niceties and ethnological refinements, that when all our difficulties vanish before the simple story of a life like our own, when the record is revealed to us as being nothing but the history of struggles and failures, sins and repentances, of men and women and people like ourselves, and of the clear and still clearer shining of a light into their hearts and lives by which the mysteries of time and of the future appear, if not altogether vanquished and brought to naught, yet, at least, as ranging themselves on the side of righteousness and development, and not of anarchy and despair; when, instead of the elaborate exegesis we expected, we hear only the charmed rhythm of this divine message through page of story, and prophet’s cry, and psalmist’s song—we can hardly credit that our trouble has been in such sort laid to rest. And, as a matter of fact, it is certain that this method of interpretation staggered the so-called religious world. Indeed, to please this world it is not enough that you profess your belief that the Bible is inspired;

this will serve you little, unless you add your conviction that the religious world is inspired in its interpretation of it. This is true of all times; but a wonderful change has passed over the religious world of England since Mr. Maurice took orders fifty years ago. It requires some effort to realise the position of those days: so many questions have been set at rest, so many outworks abandoned, so many crises which were to have ruined the Church and religion safely passed through. The whole power of the Church, and indeed of the religious world, was in the hands of the Evangelical party—a party only just entering on its decadence. The triumphs and spiritual victories of this great and missionary section of the Church were fresh in men's minds. The mental atmosphere was redolent with the names of such men as Simeon, Venn, and Romaine. The invariable result had occurred. The leaders of thought being removed, their followers adopted their formulas, and, like the Israelites with the ark at Eben-ezer, supposed, because of their adherence to these formulas, that God was still in the camp. The religious patronage of the country and the revenue of the religious societies were in their hands, and its distribution was decided, and the thought and opinions of the congregations guided, by the so-called religious newspapers. Now a man who believed that God's voice was heard not in formulas and systems, not in opinions and conclusions, but in "struggles and questionings and glimpses of light," could not expect much appreciation from excellent and

formal people trained and drilled in a system like this. His interpretation of Scripture was to them naught, for they recognised in it none of their familiar phrases. To many of these people, to attempt to see two sides of a question is not only perplexing—it is positively wicked; to endeavour to discover the particle of truth which exists in your opponent's opinion is to pander to the Devil himself. The best and most charitable of these people would say, "I cannot understand him"; and no wonder, for it is impossible to give the reader, who is unacquainted with his character, any just idea of the exquisite balance of Mr. Maurice's mind. If his whole life and writings failed to give it to so many thousands of his fellow-countrymen, it would be ridiculous to attempt it here. All I can do, it seems to me, is to insist as often as possible on this one point, that the distinguishing quality he possessed, and the quality which prevented his position from being understood and his influence felt, which caused him to be suspected of casuistry and rejected as obscure and unintelligible, was simply and solely this exquisite balance of mind and thought.

But there were other forces which, while they could not cause this estrangement, yet strengthened and perpetuated it when caused. One of these was Mr. Maurice's connection with what was called, then as now, Christian Socialism. I shall allude very briefly to this. I would rather hope that some of those men, and they are many, now in orders in the English Church, who are carrying on his work under the influence of

his spirit, and who look upon him as the inspirer and guide of their cause, will give us some account of the result of his connection with it. I will only say that the quality I have mentioned,—a balanced intellect and a consequent wisdom superior to all those who worked with him—appears to me most prominent in this phase of his work. In those days, however, of continental revolution and of political excitement, a man who had actually converted some Chartists, and was known to be intimately associated with intelligent artisans, “naturally all atheists, you know,” was regarded in many circles with horror. Nothing was too bad to believe of such a one. The clergy would say to younger men, with that recklessness of speech which is not confined to parsons, “Has no belief in the Atonement, you know”—an assertion about equivalent to denying to St. Paul any belief in the doctrine of Justification by Faith.

It is almost impossible at the present day to realise the anonymous and irresponsible tyranny wielded by the religious newspapers at the time of which we are speaking. Colonel Maurice contrasts the power of this tyranny in 1842-6, when the *Record* won its great victory over Bishop Blomfield, and the bishop, to escape the storm, actually had to abandon all those clergy who had followed his advice, and to approve of those who had refused to obey him, with its weakness in 1860, when, in response to its demand that Bishop Tait should resist Mr. Maurice's appointment to St. Peter's, Vere Street, only twenty of the London clergy signed

the address to the bishop, against three hundred and thirty-two who signed the counter-address to Mr. Maurice. Mr. Maurice's antagonism to the "immoral and godless domination of anonymous religious journalism" had been consistent, determined, and uncompromising from the beginning of his career; a great part of his unpopularity with Church people was earned in this single-handed combat with an impalpable malific power, and to him in great measure is to be attributed its fall. It would be necessary to study the files of these forgotten instruments of bigotry to understand the position truly, but this were a task before which even German conscientiousness and enterprise might well quail.

It was the chivalrous instinct which saw injustice in *ex parte* statements of an opponent's position which first roused his indignation against the religious newspapers, and it was this same habit of Mr. Maurice's mind which was a fertile source of misunderstanding between himself and the so-called religious world. To go out of your way to point out what truth there may be in the position of a man whom you firmly believe to be fighting against truth, seems to many people to be treason against the truth itself. When the honest acceptance of the Articles was in question, and an attempt was being made at Oxford to vindicate the act of subscription from an open avowal of dishonesty, to find the strong advocate of subscription, in the literal and plain sense, openly siding with the offender was no doubt puzzling to many simple people; and when Mr. Maurice approved the Dissenters' Chapels Bill,

which appeared to confirm the possession of endowments to those who had departed from the faith in support of which such endowments had been bequeathed, many good and formal people who never saw below the crust of things, and to whom no distinction ever occurred between "the eternal verities on which their faith stands, and the points which must receive a different solution in each different age,"—a distinction vital to Mr. Maurice,—were inclined to think his conduct disingenuous. Mr. Maurice did not accept the Articles and formularies as a particular righteous creed admirably expressed in language by the English Reformers, although he believed that the men of the sixteenth century were far more capable of such a task than those of the nineteenth; he accepted them as the plain testimony to the truth of an "ever-living and acting spirit of righteousness," which had ever taught the Church, and was still teaching her in his own day. He was apparently open to the retort that after all it was only Mr. Maurice's own opinion which he advocated, just as it was the opinion of other people which he opposed; but in his own mind he escaped this dilemma. "For me to assume that I am right or you are wrong," he wrote to Mr. Strachey, "in the way of putting down idolatry or any form of error is hateful and immoral, confusing ends and means, leading to the most melancholy consequences to the mind of the individual and of the country—consequences which are every day making themselves manifest."

"The exquisite acuteness of his intellectual perceptions," to use Mr. Ludlow's words, was

indeed always leading him to perceive distinctions which were quite imperceptible to ordinary minds; but it would be the very greatest of mistakes to suppose that there was in Mr. Maurice anything of the tolerant *laissez-faire* of the worldly-minded statesman or divine, to whom life and religion are a fine art. On the contrary, an almost painful earnestness pervades his language at every crisis—and such crises were chronic—of religious matters in his time.

All Christian liberty, all manly divinity, and I believe all honesty of purpose, is in peril if one step be taken in this course,

he writes on one occasion.

To lie down and sleep till the fates accomplish their own purposes, which it seems impossible that we can promote, and very likely that we may hinder, is the inference which the devil has whispered to every one a thousand times, and which most of us have obeyed till a louder whisper has awakened us. Oh, there is nothing so emasculating as the atmosphere of Eclecticism! Who that has dwelt in it has not longed for “the keen mountain” misty air of Calvinism, or anything, however biting, that would stir him to action?

he writes again. In 1843 he writes this remarkable sentence to Archdeacon Hare :

I have even thought of addressing a letter to him (Lord Ashley) on the fearful danger of making Tractarians, and Romanists too, by these violent efforts of suppressing them. But I scarcely dare meddle with such subjects; they are too exacting, and I sometimes think with trembling that that way madness lies. Nothing goes nearer to take away one’s senses than the clatter of tongues, when you feel every one is wrong, and know that if you tried to set them right you would most likely be as wrong as any. It would not be so if one had learnt how to keep sabbath days in the midst of the world’s din.

This intense earnestness, this terror of, and determination to grapple with, erroneous opinion, seems indeed at times almost inconsistent with the equally intense faith in the living and acting Spirit that was guiding the world. There are in the world two principles of action—I had almost said of culture—that of Luther and that of Erasmus. I mention these two names, so often used in this connection, because it is very curious that, while we might have expected that Mr. Maurice's sympathies would have been on the side of the cultured, tolerant, sweet-tempered, and sweet-voiced reformer, the exact contrary is the fact. He despised Erasmus from his heart. He speaks of him as "the selfish *dilettante*"—of Luther as "the Christian Hero." I think that this combination of tolerance with earnestness is the most unique thing about Mr. Maurice. His toleration was infinite; we feel disposed to wish sometimes that his earnestness had been a little less intense. Of the great controversy of his life,—that with Mr., afterwards Dean, Mansel,—he says that, had he listened to advice, he should have let it alone.

There is a passage on St. Augustine in the *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy* which seems to show that he was incapable of realising the position of a conscientious agnostic. We do not like to fancy even the slightest resemblance between him and those good people whose distress and dread would be pitiful if it were not grotesque. To hear some of these talk, for instance, at the present day, one would almost suppose that they believed that some

twenty years ago there had been a God, but that Professor Huxley and Professor Tyndall had killed Him, and that, in consequence, not unnaturally, some considerable perplexity and distress was being felt. If there be a God, it would seem probable that He will be able to protect Himself against Professor Tyndall, and I do not imagine that the Third Person of the Trinity was in such imminent danger of annihilation from Henry Longueville Mansel, D.D., as to make it necessary for Mr. Maurice to come to the rescue without an hour's delay.

It seems only yesterday, though it is a quarter of a century ago, that the controversy with Dean Mansel began. I remember with distinctness the effect that "What is Revelation?" had upon myself. The prominent feeling was how gracious it was of Mr. Maurice to lavish such a wealth of spiritual thought and vitality merely to crush that most unique, surely, of all champions of orthodoxy—the man who implicitly denied the existence and ridiculed the office and functions of the Third Person of the Trinity. It is difficult to believe that the effect of the lectures could have been such as to require such a confutation. Mr. Mansel was an acute logician, but he was not a metaphysician any more than he was a theologian. His position is utterly untenable except from a purely logical standpoint. He speaks indeed of a "revelation," but, whatever this may be, it is evident that it must be of the vaguest description, for he commences by stating that it is evident that no systematic theology has been given by it, and he exposes with admirable acuteness the

absurd statements which dogmatism has made in its attempts to formulate one. As therefore Mr. Mansel denied the possibility of any communication or acquaintance with God except by means of this shadowy nothing, it is not perhaps an unfair presumption that the tendency of the Bampton Lectures that year was towards practical atheism. His position at any rate was exactly that which Mr. Maurice felt himself, as his biographer points out, sent into the world to protest against—the establishment of some system, some idol of opinion—in place of the energising Spirit of the living God. Mr. Mansel puts passages from the New Testament at the head of his lectures, and intersperses a few more in the course of them. It is therefore fair to suppose that he had looked into that book, otherwise it would be difficult to believe that he had even heard of it.

It is very doubtful whether personal controversy is at any time productive of an advance in the apprehension of truth,—so much is lost by the introduction of the necessary personal allusion and recrimination; at any rate I think it will be admitted that Mr. Maurice did not shine in it. His conceptions and faculties were of a character too lofty for success in mere personal word-play. He is too much in earnest. He is absorbed by the splendour of his conception; dazzled, it may be, “by the abundance of the revelation.” His line of argument, as relates to his opponent, is confused; it is needlessly protracted; the point seems constantly lost sight of; long extracts from his adversary

confuse the reader, who at last does not know which of his teachers is speaking. Distracted between two disputants, neither of whom evidently in the least understand one another, attempting in vain to grasp the real meaning of the one in order that he may see how it is to be confuted by the other, the reader is at last tempted to exclaim in Mr. Maurice's own graphic words: "This way madness lies." Mr. Mansel's point of view is easily realised. He had written and preached his Bampton Lectures with considerable applause. He had previously had a correspondence with Mr. Maurice, which he appears to have conducted with courtesy. Suddenly there burst upon him an assault which he was utterly incapable of either comprehending or repulsing. He was somewhat in the position of a Weaver Bottom, who through a troubled dream is dimly conscious of a world of mystery and glamour, which he can in no way realise, of heights and depths of starry firmament, of the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the prophet. The certain deductions, as they seemed to him, of his logical sequences are perverted and mis-stated; the pure unaffected humility of Mr. Maurice appears to him to be sarcasm. The result on both sides is painful. How much better would it have been had Mr. Maurice ignored Mr. Mansel altogether, preached a series of sermons embodying all thoughts aroused by the lecturer, and left the good seed to produce its natural harvest. He might have lost some little publicity, but what an immeasurable gain! No loss of space and time on formal

statement and denial ; no waste of nerve-tissue and of physical power, of which nothing is more destructive than the irritation of personal conflict ; nothing but a sublime calm, a ceaseless flow of the Divine Reason exalting, refining, purifying the reader, raising him above the partial understandings, the inadequate conceptions, of personal debate, into the certainties of absolute truth. He always spoke of the controversy in after times as forgotten, and while, as he could not fail to do, maintaining that his position was the true one, as regretting the personalities involved in it. At the very moment it was taking place he was writing of Mr. Spurgeon, and of what he conceived to be his errors, in a tone of perfect insight and calm ; but Mr. Spurgeon's position at that time was very different to Mr. Mansel's, and his particular opinions did not touch Mr. Maurice so nearly. In one of the last things he wrote—the preface to the final edition of the *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*—he has the following passage, which forms so appropriate a conclusion to the remarks upon a once famous controversy that I hope to be allowed to quote it :—

I would not willingly have been spared one of these conflicts, for they have forced me to observe what conflicts there are in myself. Butler and Paley did not invent the questions about a conscience ; they do not exist in a volume of sermons at the Rolls, or of lectures on moral philosophy. If thou hast not a conscience, Butler will not give it thee. If thou hast one, Paley cannot take it away. They can only between them set thee upon considering what it is or is not. Thou hast senses which Locke did not endow thee with ; thou thinkest and thou actest, whether Descartes tells thee so or not.

What signifies it that Bentham laughs at sympathy, if there are sympathies between thee and the members of thy kind? How canst thou feel otherwise than grateful to Bentham for showing thee that there is a something called happiness which men are striving after, and that it may be a general, not a mere separate, happiness? If he can see nothing above or beneath but utility, was it not his function to speak of that?

The remarks which I have ventured to make upon Mr. Maurice as a controversialist apply only to pure controversy. Where he is simply stating his case, in reply forced upon him by attack, as in his "Letter to Dr. Jelf on the word 'Eternal,'" nothing can be clearer or more concise than his method and argument. Indeed, his position was so absolutely unassailable that it would have been difficult for any man to have gone wrong in it. It is not necessary to do more than allude to the miserable business of the King's College *fiasco*. A mere majority, promoted by selfish ignorance and bigotry, and snatched by fraud, had no other real effect than that of increasing Mr. Maurice's influence twenty-fold. The one point which seems to me worthy of notice is the instance it affords of the supreme intolerance and ignorance of *laymen*. A fact well worth considering at a time when schemes of Church councils and government are constantly discussed.

We have seen Mr. Maurice as a teacher of theology; we have yet to consider him as a scholar and a man of letters. This is a point of view from which he is not perhaps usually regarded, but it is assuredly a necessary one if we wish really to understand his power and influence. The *Prophets and Kings*, simple as its

pages seem in the stately rhythm of their majestic thought, could never have been written save by a Platonic scholar, and a man of literary and dramatic genius ; but what shall we say of his great work, the work of his life, which repeated editions and ceaseless labour had wrought to the point at which we have it in the last years of his life—the *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*? He would be a bold man who would undertake to criticise this book. Colonel Maurice cites the testimony of specialists in any particular period, and of teachers, who have used the book. They testify, in the only way in which, in the case of a book of such extent (not less, indeed, than the entire history of human thought), it is possible for any one to testify, to its value. If I might venture to add anything to what they have said, I should wish to call attention to the intellectual instinct which realised the later Latin genius, and, with it, the situations of absorbing interest, in which it was developed, amid the conflicts and alternating vices and virtues of the old and new faiths. No one, I imagine, can read the pages which describe the Emperor Julian, Augustine, Gregory the Great, and others, without being aware of the presence of this graphic perception, to which only genius attains—the grasp of what human thought was like during the procession of those weird centuries through which East and West passed alike, when the future of the race seemed perpetually to tremble in the balance “amid the extravagances, follies, tyrannies, rebellions of the world, which rose out of the ruins of the Empire of Augustus.” In the biography are one or

two letters of great interest, addressed by Mr. Maurice to the author of *Hypatia*, recommending to him the introduction of this Latin *race-spirit* in a more direct manner than Mr. Kingsley seemed to have intended. One passage upon St. Augustine I cannot resist quoting, it so exactly expresses the leading principle of Mr. Maurice's own life :—

He had no doubt a craving, felt in his youth and never lost, for a very definite system of opinions. But the influences which crossed this desire and drove him in search of another object were really the blessed influences of his life,—those to which he owed all the strength of his own belief and all his power of teaching others. When he had got his system nearly complete, the voice which asked him “What art thou?” and forced him in the heights or in the depths to find an answer to the question, broke the thread of his speculations and forced him to begin anew. The oftener in his after-life he heard that voice, and believed that it was the one which he was to make others to hear, the more fresh and living and full of instruction for all ages did his words become. When he forgot it, and sought to build earthly tabernacles for Moses and Elias and his Divine Lord, his spirit became confused, and he forged afresh for mankind some of those very chains from which he had been set free.

I should anticipate for the beautiful edition of this book published in 1882, with its etched portrait, an increasing and enduring recognition not only from scholars, but also from the general reader. For the latter will find in it a singular clearness and brilliancy of diction while treating of subjects usually dry and formal, and a picture of the real life of successive centuries through which runs a vein of quiet humour often very effective. It would be easy to select, indeed, from Mr. Maurice's letters, and even from his sermons, instances of

this quiet humour and of perception of the characteristics of social life which go to form genial satire.

Colonel Maurice, in the chapter we have already alluded to, gives us the following charming passage :—

It was almost painful to walk with him in any part of the town where it was necessary for him to ask his way. In the noisiest and most crowded places he would inquire his direction in the gentlest and most apologetic tone, perhaps of some bluff old costermonger woman, who, unaccustomed to hear such subdued language, would continue to shove her way along, utterly unconscious of having been addressed. He would instantly draw back as though he had been rebuffed in an intrusion which, on reflection, he felt to have been quite unwarrantable, and would watch for a more favourable opportunity of attracting the attention of some other passer-by.

This perfectly, I will not say sincere, but instinctive humility of Mr. Maurice is shown in numberless passages in his letters. One particular trait is, I think, worthy of notice. He believed that he was very deficient in a love of Nature, and says, in one place, that his first wife, whose approbation he valued above all things, was constantly regretting his deficiency in this respect. In spite of this, however, I cannot help connecting him, in my own mind, with one for whom he had the greatest admiration and respect, and who, though essentially the poet of man, is most truly associated with the love of Nature—William Wordsworth. In the *Christian Year* are some lines which throw, I think, considerable light on this connection.

And wilt thou seek again
Thy howling waste, thy charnel house and chain?

He, merciful and mild,
As erst, beholding, loves his wayward child.
When souls of highest birth
Waste their impassioned might on dreams of earth,
He opens Nature's book,

The revolution which Wordsworth wrought in the realm of English thought—the change from pseudo-civilisation, from artificial emotion, from false taste to the true life of simple manhood—made it possible for the gospel of humanity to be heard again.

Thus Nature spoke. The work was done.

He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth.

In Wordsworth's pages we breathe again the air of Palestine, when the world was young. The singleness of character and of life is before us, as in the old Hebrew pages which Maurice restored again to reality and being. Wordsworth, though perchance he was unconscious of it, was a Christian Platonist, as was Maurice. They are both of them poets in the highest sense, for they are both of them seers. They are raised above the slime of earth, into the life of the ideal. We are taught by a new philosophy, whose note seems to me to ring with a somewhat vulgar and false tone, that this is a shallow optimism; and we are referred to other poets and novelists who, we are told, are "courageous thinkers, and face the ghosts of the mind." "The business of

intellect is to master, not to shun, the disturbing elements of life." This we shall all admit; but how can those poets be said to master such elements who pander to mankind in its lowest and vilest forms? He is not a regenerator who resigns all hope and effort towards the pure and the spiritual, and contents himself with describing, in forcible rhythm, the debased and distracted life of a reckless humanity, which he lives as well as they. An optimist, however "shallow," who believes, and acts as a believer, in a regenerating energy, which is permeating the race, is a truer friend to his kind than such as these. The "living God" of Frederick Maurice solves many questions that have perplexed the wise. His teaching solves that great perplexity which has haunted the students of Spinoza from before the time of Lessing, for it explains that belief of Spinoza in a God who exists within human consciousness alone—a belief which Dr. James Martineau says is atheism, and Mr. Frederick Pollock says is not. The God of Frederick Maurice, infinite and incomprehensible as He doubtless is, enters into human consciousness by virtue of His gracious will, and may be known in consciousness by whosoever seek Him. There is no dogma of Christianity, however grotesque it may appear in its popular form, but what has its germ in the profoundest scientific truth, and none can be more certainly traced to such truth than the "living God" of Platonism and of the Christian Church, whom Frederick Maurice was sent into the world to proclaim, who enters into consciousness by the Divine Humanity, and continues His

energising power by the living Spirit, which enlightens the world. It is not necessary to dispute of the "unknowable," or of the range of consciousness of all. *Within* consciousness, and as a man sees his friend, Frederick Maurice knew God. His portrait might tell us this, where

Promise and presage of sublime emprise
Wear evermore the seal of his believing,
Deep in the dark of solitary eyes.

On the 15th of June, 1856, in the chapel of Lincoln's Inn, the sermon was drawing to a close. The somewhat strained attention became relaxed, for the well-known change in the preacher's face, the slight alteration of the voice, showed that the appeal to the reasoning faculty was over, and that the veil was rent for a moment, and that the High Priest had entered into the Holy of Holies, the "Cyte of Sarras in the Spyrituel Place":—

Towards this resurrection all creation is groaning and travailing, and that groan which burst from Christ at the grave of Lazarus was the expression of His sympathy in that groan of His creatures. . . . Do we not feel sometimes as if all power of believing in anything that is great and noble were departing from us? Do we not feel as if to believe in Him who is goodness and truth were the hardest effort of all? Does it not appear as if a second death were coming upon us, a death of all energy, of all trust, of all power to look beyond ourselves? Oh, if this numbness and coldness have overtaken us or should overtake us—if we should be tempted to sit down in it and sink to sleep—let the cry which awakened Lazarus awake us. Let us be sure that He who is the Resurrection and the Life is saying to each of us, however deep the cave in which he is buried, "Come forth!"—however stifling the grave-clothes with which he is bound, "Loose him, and let him go!"¹

¹ *Gospel of St. John*, p. 319.

Yes. Emboldened by the gracious utterance of the divinest mercy, which permits us to believe that the servant may be even as his master, and the disciple as his lord, I do not hesitate to apply these words to him of whom we speak. For these two great cries, spoken centuries ago before an open grave, have re-echoed in men's hearts before all graves, whether of the flesh or of the spirit, ever since ; and have formed the note of all prophetic utterance, and of none more so than of his. "Come forth! Loose him, and let him go!" Come forth out of the lower life : out of the life, lovely in its kind—the life of self, of fleshly beauty, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life ;—and at his call the soul came forth. But this was not enough. The soul, thus aroused from death, and stirred into a strange activity, is still crippled and wrapped in the grave-clothes of the imperfect dispensation in which we live—the grave-clothes of superstition, of formalism, of systems, and of burdens laid by human imposition upon the righteous whom the Lord has not made sad. "Loose him, and let him go!" This was the distinctive proclamation which it was the mission of Frederick Maurice to announce. How true he proved to this mission I shall not ask. I leave it for those to testify from whose stiffened limbs the grave-clothes fell at his word. Much has happened since his voice was still, but, across the lapse of time, the words are still ringing in their ears, "Loose him, and let him go!"

OF RESTRAINING SELF-DENIAL IN ART¹

THE Dorian flutes, heard through the mysterious defiles of Olympos, haunted by the legends of the Vision of God, taught their hearers, in those ancient genuine strains of Hellas, this truth above all others, that there is no Art but the Art of Life. For the Dorian flute itself was a striking product of the instinct of this unique people, themselves the ground-spring of culture to Greece and to the world, which taught them to seek after an advance in culture in the security of a patient reserve. For the severity of the three-stringed lyre having yielded, by pressure of irresistible melody, to the seven-stringed lute, the ceaseless watchfulness of the guardians of the State decided that the dividing line was reached, and he who lasciviously introduced and played upon a lute with nine or fourteen strings, was incontinently and solemnly put to death, as one who would delude and draw away the people from the life of measured and ideal Art; and, somewhere about this time, these same severe guardians admitted, doubtless after much and weighty thought, the most startling innovation of flute music, and by this wise concession

¹ From the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*.

attained, in conjunction with the seven-stringed lute, to the most perfect music that the world, pending the discovery of the violin—the vibration of string with string—was to know and hear.

This, the first music of culture—the Dorian harmony — was distinguished throughout the ancient world as possessing a unique, high-sounding, and solemn strain, befitting a people who saw life as a whole, and allowed no one Art to absorb or to deteriorate the rest of life.

“Give us that which is good and beautiful” was the Dorian’s prayer; and He who, through all the changes of the world’s story, left Himself not without a witness, taught them, amid the myrtle dingles and the many-sided, oak-covered slopes of the great hills, by the worship of Ἀπέλλων¹—the averter and defender, the Son of God who slew the Python, born of the slime and filth of earth, and descended into hell that he might redeem and restore all men to a life of brightness and of joy—to conceive the existence of this art of life, the perfection, that is, of manhood, of all things the most desirable of attainment, far beyond any single effort of the intellect, or of the plastic instinct, which may be dignified by the name of Art.

It has been said, and said truly, that only two things are capable of self-sacrifice—nature and love; but this art—the art of life—is and must be capable of it, for it contains within itself both nature and love.

It *must* be, for no existence can be made

¹ Ἀπέλλων, not Ἀπόλλων, appears to have been the ancient Doric-Æolian form.—C. O. Müller, *Dorians*, p. 323, ed. 1830.

perfect except through restraint and sacrifice ; and that art which boasts itself untrammelled and free, leaves the fresh bracing air of the open fields, with its discipline of the driving storm, and the desolate, cloudy day, and encloses itself in a tropical atmosphere in which nothing that is noble and great in human existence can breathe.

In this resolve to brace and train the intellect, in this life of restraint and sacrifice, the Dorians persevered unflinchingly. It extended to every detail of their lives. No nation ever approached them in the perfection to which they succeeded in making life an Art. The individual was so moulded into the State, that there remained only one individual—the State. It was a condition which could not become permanent. It may even be said to have been an impossible dream. To avoid the rude awakening, one would think that they dared scarcely stir, dared scarcely think ; and if they erred by too much adherence to antiquity, how could they help themselves ? But this impossible dream, if it were a dream, lasted for many generations, was probably the greatest factor in the civilisation of the world, and it will remain for ever an inspiring model and aim.

Its value to us, however, is its insistence on the necessity of restraint in Art. The contention that Art is utterly selfish, that it has but one narrow aim, according to its several developments, and that to that aim everything must yield, every moral tie, every domestic claim, is a contention utterly remote from the Dorian conception of Art, and of life, in all its minutest details and varied forms. If the moral character of Music is so certain that

he deserved death who added another string to the lute, and thereby debauched the morals of the people, what shall be said of the moral character of Painting, which of all arts appeals most to the popular mind and perceptions, and appeals with greatest force just in as much as it excels in the technique, which reproduces familiar things with greatest semblance of reality? A low test of Art! you will say: doubtless, but, it would seem, the test of to-day.

"Now," says the old Greek scholiast, with perhaps unconscious humour, "they used to call this the *Æolian* harmony, but afterwards the *ὑποδῶριον*, not, as some think, because it was pitched lower on the flute than the *Dorian*, but because,—so it seems to me,—seeing the inflated style, and the pretence to valour and virtue, they thought it was not exactly what the *Dorian* harmony was, though to a certain extent like it, and so we call what is not thoroughly *Dorian*, *ὑποδῶριον*."

"The *Dorians*," says Müller, "were contented with themselves and with the Powers to whom they owed their existence and their happiness, and therefore they never complained,"—surely the perfection of Art-life! And yet these people, who were in themselves the most perfect realisation of the Art-life ever seen among men, practised the most rigid restraint and reserve in Art that, doubtless, any people ever did. "They never complained." Under the serene sky, and among the wooded ravines and plains, so unlike the parched, arid scenes that present themselves to the traveller to-day, it was possible for this people

to fancy that it rested with themselves to attain to a perfect existence. Death itself seems to have disappeared from their view. "They looked not to the future but to present existence, everything beyond this boundary was mist and darkness, and everything that was dark they supposed the Deity to hate."

And who, then, was the Deity of this wonderful people? Ἀπέλλων—the Averter and Defender, the clear and spotless God, the destroyer, and the avenger of wrongs, the slayer of the Python, who was born amid prayer and fasting and with untold labour and pains, who descended into Hell that he might return purified and the purifier of all that trusted in him—was not, with all this, the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he was not the God of the lonely and forsaken, of the Helot, the outcast, and the slave.

He was the Saviour of a people contented with themselves and with their gods, endowed with the surpassing instinct of restraint and sacrifice even in their content and in their art. He was the God of a great effort, of a brilliant and most noble phase of Art, never perhaps equalled, but which was itself unequal to the strain of reality and sorrow, and therefore passed away, but which has left behind it this supreme message to us, the message of restraint in Art.

Since the Dorian has passed away, with his dream of cultured Art, since the philistine Roman and the barbarian of the chivalrous North has swept over the scene, there has arisen a God, the Averter and Defender, the slayer of the Serpent, who also descended into Hell. Of Him it may be

said, at least, that He is alive, that He lived among the outcast and the heavy-laden, and that the coming democracy recognises in the legends of His life the traces of a friend. He spoke the most awful and mysterious story ever told of those who dress in purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously. Surely, in *our* Art—in the days of this sacrificed and sacrificing God—we shall not manifest less restraint than was insisted on, even to the death, in the reign of the bright Sun-God, the God of joy and gladness who was never to be invoked by the sorrowful or the sad. The whole of modern life has been transformed by the worship of this God—it would be strange indeed were Art, which in itself is life, alone to remain Pagan or to return to the lowest Pagan form.

The Dorians subdivided labour in Art to such an extent that their cooks were allowed to practise only one form of cookery. An artist may be concentrated on one phase of Art to the exclusion of all others, but, in this phase of Art, he should work in subjection to the highest generic instinct and conscience—in agreement, that is, with the conscience of the whole.

It may seem a paradox, but the self-denial that restrains is its own reward. The force and vigour which would otherwise be spent in vain and fruitless wanderings in the walks of unrestrained fancy and frivolous self-pleasing, is concentrated and strengthened within more confined limits, with a result of gain surprising even to the artist himself. This is applicable to every sphere of Art. In literature many recent writers will miss a not undeserved immortality because they have followed

the leading of the single original phase of genius with which they were gifted, instead of modestly, and with a restraining denial of self, following in the steps of the great masters, and thereby gradually working into the fabric of their Art, bequeathed to them by the patient labour of the past, the special contribution which their own insight had gifted them to win. It would be instructive to trace the conscientious use which Charles Dickens made of the comic scenes in Smollett and the humorous writers of the last century, and the immense advance which his peculiar genius won.

In painting it would not be difficult to discover similar lessons. That the originators of what used to be called the pre-Raphaelite School had a distinct and imperative call, no one who remembers what the state of English painting was forty years ago will be disposed to deny, but I think that it is equally true that had the pre-Raphaelite painters exercised more restraint, had they engrafted their perfection of detail, purity, and truth of outline, boldness and truth of colour, earnestness and strength of thought, upon the abiding excellences of the old school—as, for instance, the effects of atmosphere—when we think of the old masters of English landscape—there seems to open before us possibilities of Art greater than were achieved.

There has arisen since those days another class of painters, founded mostly on some exceptional schools of Italian Art, to whom the same observations apply with still greater force. If their undoubted genius had been chastened by

an unselfish, modest submission to the lessons of the past, the world would have been spared many abortions of crude colouring, fantastical, unreal grouping and figure-drawing, wearisome monotony of feature and expression—and of elongated chin—and, latterly, of still worse sins against taste in morals. The result would have been widely different. Wondering crowds would not have thronged the Galleries, much less laudation would have emanated from friendly pens, fewer pictures probably would have been painted, but some supreme work of genius would have graced the Victorian reign.

STORIES

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

THERE was once, no matter where, only it was not in fairyland, a very wonderful house. You might not, perhaps, have thought very much about it as far as the outside was concerned, except that it stood in a wood, with glades and terraces cut out here and there, and that it was broken up into bays and gables, and covered with the green tendrils of creeping plants, and with purple clematis and yellow flowers, and that the brickwork and stone facings were toned down into a harmony of tint.

Now this house had belonged for generations to people who cared about art and harmony and colour and sound. They did not live there much. They lived mostly abroad, for they were not very rich, but they had enough to live on and to spare; and every now and then something happened that made them richer for a time; and they had great opportunities, living in Italy, of buying unexpected pictures that took your breath away as you looked at them, landscapes with wonderful lights and sun-gleams in them, and strange, pale faces that were alive and spoke to you from their worn and shattered frames. They bought also old cabinets, black and ivory, and others from

Venice, inlaid craftily with different colours of wood, as with birds and flowers; and every now and then some of the people would come home for a time, and then they would please themselves with arranging all these treasures, and trouble themselves very much with questions of colour and harmony; and they brought down paintings from the attics where they were stored, and had them hung, and stood before them for hours, and could not satisfy themselves or their fastidious taste, and had them sent back into the attics again. Sometimes, perhaps, they were called away to Italy, or maybe on a longer journey, before these counter orders could be obeyed; or perhaps, now and then, a degenerate heir appeared who had the pictures routed out of the attics and hung up promiscuously. So in time the rooms and the walls were furnished somehow, and in the still midnights when the moonlight filled the rooms the modest and timid Baldassare Peruzzi, whose classic beauty recalled the marbles of Greece, stole down from its frame and wandered into the lonely glens and through the ruined castles of the Salvator Rosa which hung by chance next it; and the unhappy Beatrice with the pleading eyes gazed so long in the mellow evenings at the gay festivals and dances of peasants on the opposite wall that something of their happiness passed into her sorrowful eyes, and their joyous merriment was somehow subdued and harmonised by her presence. And so, as the time went on, the gracious hand of Time and the mellowing sunlight "through many a cloudless day" subdued and softened everything that at

first was strange and incongruous, not only in form and colour, but also in mind and in feeling, until the whole house was something like a faded picture or a half-forgotten dream where nothing seems very real or very distinct or brilliant, but where nothing, on the other hand, is inharmonious or hostile, and where nothing jars upon the sensitive nerve.

Now it happened that one of these people, who expected to live a long time, and was looking forward to many delightful days and to all kinds of intellectual pleasures and fame, and to being married and having a wife and children and heirs and all manner of fine things, died suddenly at Naples, probably of a bad smell, and everything at once became quite different from what it would have been if things had not happened as they did.

Upon this the property came to a young man who was at Oxford reading for his first degree. He had intended to be a clergyman, and had serious thoughts of becoming a missionary and going out to those islands where Bishop Patteson was killed ; but when he was told that this great property was his he changed his mind, and, without waiting even to take his degree, he went down to the village where he was born and proposed to a young lady whom he had known ever since he was a little baby, but whom he had never hoped to marry because her father had made a great deal of money by the manufacture of coffin furniture, and considered that his daughter ought to take that position in society to which she was entitled by her birth. In a few weeks

these young people were married, and went to live in the wonderful house which stood in a wood.

Now this young man, though he did not go to the islands where Bishop Patteson was killed, yet he was a good young man, and, remembering that he had once thought of being a clergyman, he set himself to do what good he could in a quiet way to the people that lived upon his estate; and his wife, though her father had made a fortune by selling coffin furniture, was thought by many people to be quite as good a lady as her neighbour whose father had lost one on the turf, so that on the whole they got on very well and lived many years in this beautiful house, and had several pleasant little children, and, what was still more important, they did not "restore" nor alter anything in it.

These little people ran about all over the place, and though they could have told you nothing about it, yet they were in fact the children of the house, and grew up to be something very different from what they would have been had they lived elsewhere. For the solemn Vandycks that hung against the wainscot of the entrance hall, with its black and white marble flags, the gorgeous Titians which filled the music-room, and the lovely faded Claudes which made the great drawing-room like a dream in the placid summer dawn had some effect upon these children's lives, and made their natures somewhat different to what they would otherwise have been.

The eldest of these children was a girl named Julia, and on no one had the house exerted a

greater influence than on her. She was a child whom people stopped to look at once and again, —a child with large dark eyes, whom it was a palpable absurdity for a grown person of average intellect only to patronise.

One evening after the children were gone to bed but did not feel inclined to sleep, she began to talk to those of her brothers and sisters who slept in the same room.

“You children think,” she said, “that when we go to bed the world comes to an end and nothing else is done till we get up in the morning, but you are wonderfully mistaken. What we see is nothing at all but a mere getting ready. The real world begins after we are gone to bed. Then all the houses everywhere are lighted up. The people put on their real clothes; they start off in carriages to visit each other, in towns; they go to theatres, where they see wonderful things that I can’t understand or conceive, though I have tried very hard to think what they are like. Here in this house you cannot think what goes on. I have often heard the carriages on the terrace bringing up the guests—Cinderella’s godmother, I dare say, and all the other wonderful people. Then they dine with all kinds of delightful things to eat and drink, and then they play music and stand about and talk, and then the most wonderful thing of all happens, for all the pictures that hang upon the walls come to life, and come down and walk about among the live people, and talk to them and tell them all about things that happened hundreds and hundreds of years ago, and that is why grown people are so wise and know such a

number of things that we cannot remember though we learn them out of books. Jane read it all to me out of a book one day, how all the china and little figures in the cabinets all came to life because somebody sneezed three times on a Friday. Oh, it was so nice; and mamma came in and said that such things were not fit for a little girl to hear. So I know it is all true, because that is what they always say to us if a thing is true. And there are many books written by a great man who lived abroad somewhere, whom they all think a great deal of, and he says just the same thing, and he says they are sometimes seen by children if they go downstairs after all the other people are gone to bed."

And being quite out of breath with telling, Julia came to a stop.

"Why, it must be like a dream," said little Harry.

"It is more real than a dream," said his sister; "though some people," she added, mysteriously, "say that dreams are real, and all we do besides is a mere nothing."

"How can that be?" said her brother; "when we dream we lie in bed and do nothing, but in the day we get up and walk about and do all sorts of things that must be real."

This argument, *ad populum*, was too much for Julia, so, like a wise young person as she was, she put it on one side.

"Well, I did not say that it was so; I only said some people thought so."

"Then they must be very foolish people," said Harry.

"At any rate, they are not rude, like some little boys," said his sister.

And it did really happen that a few weeks after this conversation, as Julia was just falling asleep, one night she heard the carriage wheels upon the terrace as the guests arrived. It was old Midsummer night, July the 6th, and the weather was very hot. The child roused herself up at the noise of the wheels, and for a moment it seemed doubtful whether she would put her bold design into execution and venture downstairs or not. But she was so sleepy that she could hardly think or remember what she had resolved to do; and just then there were no more sounds upon the gravel, and the little head fell back upon the pillow, and the stout resolution—ah me! that no other resolutions were renounced so easily!—was forgotten, and Julia fell asleep.

But between two or three hours afterwards the child woke with a start, and sat upright in bed. The moon was shining full into the room, and an awful sense oppressed Julia that she had forgotten or neglected something that she ought to have done. Overpowered by this feeling she rose, and without staying to put anything on, in her embroidered and laced night-dress and with her little bare feet, she opened the door of her bedroom and went out.

The great staircase was all ablaze with light, and as the child went down, the lofty walls on either side, which reached up far out of sight, seemed like a vast Jacob's ladder covered with ladies and gentlemen in gay and curious dresses,

ascending and descending. The grim carved heads upon the balusters seemed to nod kindly at Julia and to wink with their eyes as much as to say :

"All right, little girl, go on! there are fine doings down below. We should go downstairs, only we cannot stir."

The child went down in a kind of trance of awful expectation, and, opening the door at the foot of the staircase, she went at once into the great hall.

This also was alight, but was quite empty : the black and white flags stretched out before Julia to apparently a limitless extent, but at the opposite end she saw the great fireplace with a flowering hydrangea standing in it ; and over it King Charles the First standing by his horse, which was held by a page. All round the room, upon the walls, stood gentlemen dressed more or less like the king, and they all tried to look as much like their master as they could, and they especially tried very hard to get the same look into their eyes that he had. Some of them succeeded in this very well, but some could not manage it at all and looked very absurd in making the attempt ; but just opposite the king there stood a gentleman, in a superb dress, looking over his shoulder. The expression of his face was lofty and beautiful, and his eyes were finer even than the king's.

The child entered bravely upon the desert and cold marble that lay before her, but before she had gone very far her feet were quite chilled, and she stopped for a moment to warm them upon the skin of some great beast that lay upon the floor. What put such ideas into her mind will never

now be known, but as she stood there it seemed to her that the king left his horse and page and came down from his frame and began to walk up and down the floor in a very stately way. The gentlemen seemed all to stand ready in their frames to come down should he require them.

After the king had taken two or three turns, there came suddenly running into the room a little fat man, like a Dutchman, who began talking very fast to the king about the prices of his pictures being very much cut down, and especially one painted for what he called "*le ducq de Jarc*," which had been cut down from two hundred pounds to one hundred. He was going on to say something about arrears of pension; but when the king heard all this he looked very grand indeed, and there came an expression into his eye as though he was looking at something many thousand miles away, and could not by any possibility see anything between himself and it. He waved his hand towards an old gentleman with a ruff, who carried a white wand in his hand and had a great purse at his girdle and stood in the frame next the king's. When the old gentleman saw this, he tried to look as much like the king as he could, only he did not do it very well, and his eyes evidently saw something five or six miles away—a mere trifle. The little Dutchman ran up to him and began talking very fast; but Julia was so frightened that she forgot the cold flags and ran across the marble floor and went out of the hall.

The door opened into the library, which was also alight and quite empty. Passing through

this room with less terror than before, for there were no portraits here, except one over the mantel-piece who took no notice of such a little girl, she reached the door of the great drawing-room.

Now inside this door, which was open, there hung beautiful new hangings of cloth of silk, partly drawn and worked all over in divers colours. The little girl, who felt very cold, curled herself up in these warm curtains and looked into the room. Then, indeed, she saw a wonderful sight.

The room was all ablaze with a soft and concealed light, and was rich with the perfume of flowers which were piled up in corners and in the centre of the settees. The lovely Claudes upon the walls, with their depths of light and sky, stood out in the strong light as they never stood by day, and floating in from the room beyond, the door of which was open, came the sound of delicious music, the ripple of the grand pianos, and the wail of a violin. Standing about were beautiful ladies in laced dresses of every shade and colour, and talking to them were gentlemen in black—some in velvet and some in silk. Richards the butler and the footmen (only they looked much more beautiful than they ever did by day) were handing some delicious drink in glasses. How precious it must be to be served in such tiny little cups! The child lay still and held her breath with wonder and delight.

The delicious music charmed her senses into repose, the rich odours of the perfumed apartment penetrated to her brain, the gay figures passing each other to and fro as they crossed the room,

dazzled and perplexed her sight, as she lay there soft and warm in the silken hangings. The child fell asleep.

And, about the witching hour of twelve on that Midsummer night, she began to dream. She thought that the guests had all retired, and that the suite of rooms was empty ; but in this she was mistaken, for one of the visitors who was staying in the house, a German gentleman, remained long after the rest, and he began to practise fantasias upon the grand piano, improvising low soft music to himself. And the child thought that though she lay still for a long time and watched, yet nothing happened as she expected. The portraits did not come down from the walls and walk through the rooms, the china shepherds and shepherdesses and the grave mandarins upon the buhl tables did not come to life, nor did the ebony cabinets open of their own accord and let out a wonderful throng of Japanese ladies in ivory, carrying mystic flowers, and old peasants in carved wood from the Hartz forest, and monkeys that played violins, and silk birds of bright colours, and brilliant plates that got themselves arms and legs for the occasion, and Venice glass that threw weird dragon shadows, though all these charming people stood there ready, as Julia thought, to pour forth in crowds, tumbling over each other in their eagerness to enjoy their short hour of freedom. None of these things happened ; but things more wonderful than anything that had crossed little Julia's brain appeared in her dream that night.

For she thought that, after she had lain there some time, she was gradually aware that the room

was full of figures of the most intense interest and charm. She could not say whether these figures were large or very small, as all fairy forms should be, for it seemed to her that they had no connection with the room itself or with her own person, though instinct with all gracious and kindly sympathy with herself and all mankind. They were of both sexes, and of every form and aspect of which human life is full. They were drawn from no one rank of life, nor from any single epoch of time. The maiden of yesterday in the fashion of her hour appeared side by side with the monk and sage of centuries past, and peer and chimney-sweep, fishwife and exquisite, mingled amicably in the stream of being which filled the room. All the personages of fairy tale and legend, it is true, were here, but mingled with them were others innumerable, upon whom no one eye save that of the All-Father had ever gazed, whose lives and sorrows were unknown to all save to a few equally nameless and undistinguished people and to the Divine Pity which exists for all. There were weeping girls to whom for a few short hours life had seemed prosperous and happy, and there were others to whom happiness seemed only as the common everyday air they breathed. The child gazed with delight upon this marvellous throng.

At last a single figure seemed to separate himself from the crowd and to advance towards her. He was dressed in a flowing robe, and carried a long white wand as though he were a magician: in "the green land of dreams," however, Julia spoke to him without fear.

"Can you tell me, sir, who all these people are?"

"We are the people," replied the magician, "who live in sound. As you are a very little girl, you may not perhaps even have heard that many very wise persons have supposed that there are beings which exist in fire, air, and water—spiritual beings who more or less resemble mankind. I only mention this to explain to you at the outset that, whether these people exist or not, we have nothing whatever to do with them—have, in fact, no connection with them in any way whatever. We come," continued the magician, "of a very exalted birth; in fact, we are the offspring of thought." As he said this, he looked very proud, and evidently thought that Julia would be very much overawed; but perceiving that she did not understand a word that he was saying, and was therefore not in the least impressed, he assumed an expression of greater modesty, and continued:

"It is true, as I said before, that we live in sound, but we are not born of sound. We are born of the union of art and sound, or rather" (and here he looked as though he were going to say a very fine thing), "to express myself more exactly, we are born of the union of art and human thought, wedded in the aisles of the glorious cathedral-church of sound."

He was obliged to stop and take breath for a moment after this, and Julia said:

"Then you are what everybody has thought after they have been listening to beautiful music?"

The magician seemed rather taken aback by

this matter-of-fact way of putting it; but, like a clever man, he rallied in a moment or two, and said, looking very wise :

“Not exactly : your epigram, though pointed, scarcely expresses the whole of the matter ; for thought, when it is once conceived, has an existence of its own, and never dies ; look to where I point with my wand : you see a young girl in all the matchless grace of happiness and youth ; that girl entered into the life of sound during one short hour of harmony one evening long years ago ; the person who, as you say, thought these things during the fine music, fell a few weeks afterwards into a great sorrow, and after many years died, a sad and lonely woman ; but this lovely creature, born in that bright hour of light and melody, never dies. She is part of the life of sound, and wherever harmonious sound is heard—sound, that is, which is the result of art—she exercises (so curious is the hereditary instinct which the human race hands on to successive generations) no inconsiderable influence on mankind. You may see around you,” and he waved his wand over the ever-changing scene, “groups which met together for a few moments in the dimly-lighted streets of great cities years ago, at plays long forgotten, in theatres long since swept away, but these affections and events which the actors themselves, perchance, forgot on the morrow, or at any rate in a few short years, live on. There is an awful sphere of consequence in which the smallest leaf never falls impotently to the ground, with that I have nothing to do. But when these forgotten

moments are once admitted to partake of the existence of our race, there too they live on for ever, they also are parts of the life of sound."

"But," said Julia: "I seem to see wandering among these beautiful people, who, you say, are your relations, some others of a different aspect and form."

"Ah!" replied the magician, "you see them, do you? I do not. They are related to those other beings of whom I told you before. They are the people who live in *scent*. Very worthy people, no doubt: I have no wish to say a word against them, only we have no connection whatever with them. They have nothing to do with art or with mind."

"You speak a great deal about art," said Julia; "What has that to do with your existence in sound?"

"I used that expression, little girl," said the magician, who began to think that the child was rather too clever, "for conciseness and brevity. It would be, perhaps, more correct to say that we exist in harmonious sound. *You* cannot breathe in foul air; I do not say that we cannot live—for we never die—but we continue our existence only in harmonious sound, with mere noise we have nothing to do. Nor can we breathe freely in sound which—however harmonious—is not under the influence of mind, or, if you prefer the word, soul. However skilful the performance may be, it is an arid and dry atmosphere in which we cannot breathe. But there is an art so perfect, by long training and instruction, by something higher than itself, that it supplies the

place of soul. In sound evoked by this art-soul we exist freely—are existing even now.”

During this sentence Julia was so fast asleep that she did not even dream. The magician poked her up with his wand.

“In order that you may understand this more clearly,” he said, “I am about to try whether you can see anything more.”

He passed his wand over her eyes; the child looked out eagerly upon the still crowded room.

“Yes!” she said, “I do! I see other figures different from those which I saw before, yet passing freely among them. They are more stately and brilliant in appearance, yet they do not seem to me, somehow, so gentle and lovely to behold.”

“These,” replied her instructor, “are the creatures who live in colour. That is,” he continued, with somewhat of a vindictive look at the child, “in harmonious colour directed by art. They are not so numerous nearly as we are, nor are they so easily perceived by men. For whereas there has scarcely been anybody but has done somewhat at some period of his existence to people the life of sound, those to whom the gorgeous dwellers in colour have been revealed have been few, and therefore the human race has done little to people its mystic avenues. I will try you once again.”

And once more he passed his wand over Julia's eyes.

“I see,” said the child, speaking as in a mesmeric trance—“I see other beings still. They pass among the two first as if of the same kindred, but their outlines are faint and exquisite

and beautiful, and they are shadowy as a dream. Sir, who are these?"

"These," said the magician, "are the people who live in form. They are very few in number; for as those who are influenced by colour are much less than those whom music has delighted, so those whose mind has fed upon pure form are far fewer still. But such as they are, they pride themselves exceedingly upon the purity of their birth, alleging that the culture which delights in form is of the highest order; and they are, as you see, in consequence, exquisitely beautiful. I confess that to my mind both they and the dwellers in colour are cold and lifeless, and their beauty is of a kind which fails to stir the blood, but this may be merely a prejudice of my birth."

The magician here became so very prosy that Julia fell into a profound sleep, unbroken by any dream. The magician stirred her several times with his wand, but failing to awake her, he desisted, and went on his way; and what else took place that night in this wonderful house it is impossible to say, for there was no one there to see.

No doubt many things very strange and delightful happened; but this thing is certain, that when the housemaids came in somewhat late the next morning, and began to move the furniture and the hangings, they found the child safe and warm and fast asleep. The country servants, who believed in such things, were quite certain that she had seen the fairies: and I suppose she had.

THE CHILD IN THE GRAVE

INTRODUCTORY

THE sources of the contempt which we feel for what we call "truisms" seem to me to afford some little matter of thought. Truism is described in the dictionaries as meaning "self-evident truth"; the contempt we feel for it, therefore, cannot arise from its essential nature, but must be caused either by the way in which the truism is put before us, or the way in which we ourselves regard it. It cannot be contended that an indifference or stupidity which prevents us from realising a truth is a sufficient reason for despising it; and, on the other hand, it would seem more reasonable to endeavour to realise and make our own an obvious truth, no matter in however trite, bald, or pretentious a way it may be forced upon our notice by some ignorant babbler.

The peculiarity of a truism is that the moment it is realised by us, it loses all its trite, stupid, and pretentious character, and becomes at once vital truth, full of reality, of interest, of life, and of that pathos that touches the heart. For whatever may be said against truisms, this at least must be admitted, that they are coexistent with our race, and from the earliest dawn of human life upon the earth have followed men in all their

toilsome wanderings, and the reflections which are called up by these trite subjects possess an unequalled attraction, whenever the mind is prepared to realise and receive them.

Relics of the past, of whatever nature, attract these reflections necessarily. When, in turning the pages of an old book, you come upon notes written by a hand long since at rest, suggested by a mind which, long since, earthly matters ceased to interest, it is impossible not to experience some tender feeling towards the former possessor of the very book you hold, valuing it as you also value it, thinking much the same thoughts in connection with it that you think, resigning it at length as you will have some day to resign it. In this wonderful and mysterious existence in which we find ourselves, this linking mind to mind in the past, this treading even the narrow pathways of the grave, fascinates us to follow in its track.

But perhaps the most powerful suggestors of such thoughts are old letters. No subject can be more trite, yet will any of us say that we have taken these fragile messengers of the past into our hands without interest? The yellow paper worn and thin with age, the quaint handwriting, the bare appearance of the outside, with no postage stamp and no office mark, only the figure which tells how costly letter-writing was long ago—all interest us. The contents, whether we have a family interest in the writers or not, charm us many ways. First the present reality: “I am sitting in the morning-room after breakfast.” “Lucy would send her love, but is taking tea

this evening at Mary's." Ah, those mornings, that evening's tea-table, how long since past away! "The country is most beautiful, serene, and quiet, after the gaiety of town; and the evenings are very pleasant, as the days lengthen." How many springs have welcomed the young and happy into life, how many autumns soothed the old and weary, on the downward path, since then! "Frederick's beautiful boy was here this morning, making his way amongst us." Ah me, Frederick's beautiful boy made his last way upon the ladders at Badajos!

The letters I have been reading take you into English country-life at the latter end of the last century—that life which Mrs. Sherwood has so charmingly depicted, and which is well described in the earlier chapters of her own life. The old country houses with their formal gardens, and quaint drawing-rooms full of Indian and Chinese curiosities, and paintings of Reynolds and Gainsborough. The state visits at long intervals; my Lord's or Esquire Cecil's stately call in a coach and six, talked of by the villagers until the next similar visitant arrived. The exciting journeys, commenced in the private carriage or on horses kept expressly for travelling, through the long, narrow, wooded lanes, to the nearest market-town, and thence by coach or post-chaise along the great turnpike roads. "Why do we not see more of each other," says one writer, "we are only four days' journey apart?" Where will four days' journey take us now? One constantly recurring incident is the annual visit to Bath or Cheltenham for "the waters," varied, but not till

towards the end of the period, by an enterprising excursion to the seaside: enterprising visits in those days, and hitherto considered insalubrious, when lodging-house evils did not exist, only because there were no lodgings to be had.

In these letters, this old-world and picturesque life is peopled with all the common incidents and characters which, under different aspects, are familiar to us now. Births, the married life, the deathbed, fill most of their faded pages. The marriage of the heir, and his picture by the great artist of the day—standing in full dress, in a sylvan scene, with his horse and favourite dog. Other objects of art more peculiar to the age—the mezzotint and line engravings of the wonderful mechanical productions of the day, the new bridge, the astonishing canal carried over valleys and cut through hills; the views of manufactories and collieries, elaborately and magnificently engraved, as objects of great and general interest, well worthy of the possession of the polite and cultivated.

The letters extend over a series of years. Sorrow, disappointment, the frustration of fond hopes for others, are to be found in their pages. "I am accustomed," says one writer, a lady, "to disappointments and sad tidings from that side of the house. I have gone thus far on my pilgrimage, nothing is left me but to go on still to the end, and if the end be crowned, it will be well. Ah, how well!"

Out of these worn pages and this old-world life, together with other materials, I have drawn the threads which weave themselves into the

following history, which it seems to me may, with even greater consistency than the piece which bears that title, be called by the name of one of Hans Christian Andersen's admired tales,

THE CHILD IN THE GRAVE.

The coast of Flintshire, on the western shore of the Dee estuary, is composed of parallel ravines running down to the sea, each of which is watered by a mountain stream. These streams and ravines have been from the earliest times the scenes of mining operations, especially in lead, dug from the hillsides. Towards the middle of the last century, however, this country became the centre of great activity, by the introduction of numerous mills and collieries. Copper was found in veins of great richness, and works for smelting, and mills for founding, and battering brass, and for brass, steel, and iron wire, were established; the principal of which, the Pary's mine company, equalled in comparative importance any of the gigantic companies of the present day. Another company, called the Gadly's, or, as their charter expressed it, "The governor and company for smelting down lead with pit coale and sea coale," flourished with great reputation for a long period, until, indeed, they had worked out all their ore. "This company," an old writer explains, "was often called the Quaker company, from the great number of persons of that mild persuasion who were in it." Cotton and paper mills were also established, as well as numerous other works. All these, together with the collieries, which were for a time very

extensive, drew together numbers of people from all parts, and the population doubled between 1760 and 1780. The wooded valleys resounded with the noise of mills and blasting, and were crowded with the wild and hardy miners. Industry was much more picturesque in those days than in our own. The extensive pools, necessary for their water-power, abounded with fish, and numbers of gay-plumaged kingfishers haunted their banks. The people were picturesque as the miners of the Hartz; half-labourer, half-peasant, they joined the quaint customs and beliefs of the latter class with others equally quaint, originated by their new calling. They believed in fairies and dwellers in the mines, and the fiery tongues, hovering over the pit mouths in the impure gas, awed them independently of the danger they knew they portended. In the wild sky above the Dee channel, and over the hilltops, they heard the hounds of the spectre Huntsman; and it would seem that these superstitions extended to some, at least, of the more educated classes; for it is recorded that the coal-adventurers, as they were called, suffered greatly from the depredations committed by the poor, rather than prosecute, and run the risk of being cursed at St. Ælian's Well. Farming and mining were closely connected, the same man cultivating wheat on the upper lands and digging ore in the dingles.

The landed gentry, who benefited greatly by the mineral wealth of the land, threw themselves heartily into the common work, and manifested great sympathy and kindness towards the

peasantry. The old feudal feeling was almost unimpaired, and the gentry ruled the land with undisputed power. They exerted themselves greatly in times of scarcity. They established, or assisted the companies to establish, Sunday schools. They encouraged the cottagers to cultivate gardens, and they opened canals and built wharfs to help the commerce of the country. They were despotic landlords, expected passive obedience, and adhered rigidly to the distinctions of rank, but beyond this their tenants seem to have had little to complain of. They were mine-owners as well as landlords, and even sometimes partners in the mills and other works. Many of them, as the Mostyns and Pennants, were men of culture and education. The ladies resembled most of their class of that day, and proved the compatibility of extreme refinement with homely domestic lives and duties, and not much book-learning.

One of these gentlemen, called, according to the custom of those days, Esquire Hendre, of Trefalen, whose estates, which were not large, had increased enormously in value through the discovery of the coal and ore, was naturally one of the most active in these new pursuits. He held shares in many of the companies, and worked his own coal-mines. He was descended, as all the gentry were or claimed to be, from the chief of one of the fifteen tribes of North Wales; and his wife, a lady of great beauty and superiority, was the daughter of a family which

claimed direct descent from Owain Gwynedd, Prince of that country. The importance which these refined and educated gentlemen, in their costly libraries, and their wives' elegant tea-rooms, attached to their descent from these savage barbarians, is very curious. Squire Hendre and his lady had only one child, a little boy of great promise, and the inheritor of his mother's beauty, and the chief thought of their lives was to leave this heir in possession of estates and position unequalled by any of his forefathers. When only six years old he was a child of great originality and acuteness of intellect, and, even then, almost a companion to his father and mother in their interest in the people around them. His father would take him on his rides over the steep hills and down into the wooded valleys of the estate, and the wildest and roughest miners were pleased to see the little boy by the squire's side. But of course these rides could only be now and then, whilst his mother was seldom separated from her son, and was united to him by an almost mysterious sympathy. She was a lady of that acute nervous sensibility which some have considered due to magnetic influence, and which is commonly found among the inhabitants of hilly mining-districts, by which the mind and body are so brought into sympathy with another as almost to abolish the confinements of matter and of space. Her child's nature, stronger and more intelligent than her own, exerted, even at that early age, an influence over her which after events alone could describe. Her education having been what we should now

consider very limited, her mind, though as truly refined as any lady's of the present day, constantly occupied with such influences as surrounded her (as indeed was very much the case with all before the days of railways and newspapers), became formed to a certain extent in unison with those ideas and superstitions which actuated the people around her, refined by her own high nature and intercourse with intelligent and educated men.

But the happiness which the father and mother enjoyed was not to last. When the child had nearly completed his seventh year, his parents were alarmed by an epidemic fever, which, frequently hovering among the more crowded parts of Flint and Holywell, had this year extended itself over a wider extent of country; and, to increase the alarm, a terrible kind of quinsy, most fatal to children, which several times in the last century brought desolation into England, appeared in Wales again. Several years before this time the three children of the Vicar of Holywell had been taken away by this scourge—a blow from which the poor man never recovered; and, later still, the four children of Sir Richard Mostyn of Gloddaeth were also swept away. It is therefore not surprising that the family at Trefalen were very much alarmed at the approach of this fatal complaint. It was thought best that Madame Hendre and her child should go to "Park," an old jointure-house belonging to the family, situated some miles inland upon the high ground, and considered very healthy. They had not been here a week before the child

was seized with this fatal disorder, and before help could be summoned he was dead. This terrible blow, desolating for ever their earthly lives, reduced the unhappy parents to the prostration of utter despair. Madame Hendre remained in a partially unconscious state for many days, refusing consolation, and even nourishment. To the squire the blow was equally terrible. All his desires and efforts were connected with this child ; everything was prospering with him, a future full of every satisfaction was opened to his view, but this one blow rendered all valueless ; whatever wealth and power he might possess, no wealth or power could ever give him another child. For several days the family remained crushed and inert, and the body, which it was remarked exhibited no symptoms of decay, was kept longer than usual before burial ; but after a few days Squire Hendre saw, even in his grief, the folly of thus clinging to the dead, and gave orders for the interment at the Parish Church of Trefalen, the " Eterna Domus " of the race. This little church is placed towards the head of the ravine in which the few cottages of Trefalen stand, in a most secluded and remote situation. The ravine, like the rest of the valleys, is thickly wooded, the principal trees being oaks, interspersed with groves of hazel and white thorn. The winding of the valley shuts out all view below the churchyard, except that of the trees, the small stream, and one narrow slice of the distant sea ; above the church, the trees form a thin screen before the mountain ground, where the small black cattle graze the

heath and coarse grass. In this little churchyard, in the mountain air and among the sources of the streams and the roots of the metallic veins and of the oaks, was the child buried. A handsome tomb was placed over him, but Roubiliac himself received an order for a marble monument, to be erected in the chancel of the little church.

When Madame Hendre recovered sufficiently to know what had taken place, a strange idea took possession of her mind—probably suggested by what the servants had told her of the appearance of the body—that her child was not dead. This belief was not at all a terrible one to her, nor did it induce her to take any steps to recover possession of her lost treasure. It seemed as if it was impossible for her mind to link the idea of death with that of her child; and on the other hand, as though her nature, simple and earthly in its education and attachments, could not penetrate the earthly veil and realise the existence of spiritual life. Her delusion had a kind of perception that the world could not be expected to join in her belief; and not only this, but a still more curious sort of instinct, that nature itself was against her, and could not be brought either to acknowledge the truth of her conviction or to allow that truth to be made palpable to others beside herself—that truth which she held with a kind of silent confidence against the world and nature equally; but, on the other hand, it had no reference whatever to a spiritual life, unconnected with the body and the grave. It appeared to be a simple assertion that the child

that lay buried under the sod of the little churchyard of Trefalen was not dead ; that, so far as a child buried in a grave could be supposed to influence the upper world, that child was influencing it ; and that especially to her, his mother, that influence was extended perpetually, drawing her towards him, and deciding her feelings and conclusions, and even her actions, by his desires and thoughts. And thus far no doubt it was the fact that the image, which the strong nature of the child had established on the mother's mind, was a positive existence ; so much so, that it reacted upon her mind, as the presence and influence of another living person would have done, and was so clear, defined, and individual in its character and properties (quite different in many respects from her own) that it brought hers gradually into conformity to its own. This belief did not show itself in any obtrusively outward way, but acted as a constant silent influence upon her both by day and night ; making her resemble, perhaps more than anything, a person who is expecting every moment some dear friend to arrive, and is anxiously arranging every little object, and picturing the arrival to herself, and, by such fancies, bringing her own mind and thoughts into a state most similar to those of the friend whom she expects,—only Madame Hendre never expected anything, nor looked for any arrival before the arrival of the Messenger to take herself away. All that this strange instinct or opinion taught was that she had still a child, a living, breathing child, a child whose powerful and sweet influence was acting there,

not only upon herself but upon others—a child in the grave.

And it did act upon others ; for not only in a very obvious way were others the better for it, by the influence it had upon her own character and actions, so that much of the good she did, and of the holy effect which her life produced upon others, was due to this child in the grave, but also this fixed belief of hers became so well known and talked over by the people, that it became a positive fact in the neighbourhood, not indeed that the child was alive really in the grave, but that it surely was alive in the hearts and imaginations of the people ; and that perhaps not the least powerful thought that determined the actions and words of these wild superstitious peasants was the child that was buried in the hillside above Trefalen—the child in the grave.

Two or three years passed, and gradually another thought occupied the mother's mind—that she should see her child again. To this end she requested her husband that the tomb might be opened and the lid of the little coffin raised. How she obtained her husband's consent to this strange proceeding is not known,—probably by her sweet and patient life, and by the love and pity in his heart. He gave the necessary orders with secrecy ; nevertheless several of the miners and peasantry were present when the tomb was opened before the squire and his lady, and the lid of the coffin raised, that the child in the grave might be seen again.

Now, whether it was from the nature of the

disease, or the character of the soil, or of the mineral waters that trickled through the earth, it is said that, when the coffin was opened, the face of the child, which was all that could be seen, appeared as fresh and beautiful as the day it died. There was the same smile, the same calm rest of the eyelids, the same colour of the cheek. When Madame Hendre saw her child again, thus miraculously, as it seemed to her, alive in the grave, and even in health, she fainted away, and the squire gave orders that the coffin should be fastened down and the grave closed up at once.

This sight of her child could not strengthen her former belief in Madame Hendre, for that was impossible, but it produced in her an increased happy certainty and hope, as though she began to believe that she and her child would at last triumph over nature itself. But the shock to her bodily health, in spite of this increased happiness of the mind, was very great, and her husband decided upon going abroad for several years. He himself regarded this strange belief as the effect of disordered intellect, and he hoped the change of scene and association would restore his wife's mind. They went to Paris, but war breaking out with France, upon that country taking part with the revolted States of America, they did not stop long, but travelled into Italy, where they lived for seven or eight years.

Some letters of introduction which Squire Hendre carried, took them to Genoa, and this beautiful city so pleased him that he resolved to remain there. He hired a country house in the

valley of the Bisagno, one of the environs, of which the slopes were at that time covered with palaces and "*maisons de campagne*." Several of these had been abandoned of their masters, who appeared to take less pleasure in these beautiful palaces than their ancestors did, preferring houses in the city. They were adorned by neglected frescoes of extraordinary beauty, and paintings by the greatest masters of Italy—then so common in that country that they appear to have been left as fixtures on the walls; and were surrounded by groves and gardens, murmuring with fountains, and the perfume of whose orange, citron, and jasmine flowers struck the sense leagues out of sight of land at sea.

A certain pathos attended the last days of the old European society, then rapidly approaching to its end. Surrounded by the splendid but often neglected accumulations of the past, soon to be swept away and dispersed over the world, the privileged classes continued their life of earthly enjoyment and mental luxury (like the swan that meets its death with song), till the tempest, heard first in the thunder of the French Revolution, swept them from their palaces and estates. Genoa was surpassed by few cities in this wealth of accumulated interest and enjoyment. It was one vast collection of the relics of past taste and refinement. The most exquisite paintings filled its churches and its vast saloons; marbles from the finest sculptors crowded its lovely gardens. In one of its churches was a vessel, positively affirmed to be that Holy Grail for which the chivalry of centuries had sought in

vain. Its society, brought from all quarters by its commerce, was of the most delightful variety—its nobles and the commercial classes lived on friendly terms. Its decadence was more mental, in intellect and in art, than in outward prosperity ; its trade was still flourishing, and vast public works had just been completed at great expense. The splendour of its streets of palaces, of polished marble and designed by Rubens, was unsurpassed in Europe ; the throng of carriages which crowded its promenade at the fashionable hours was magnificent. Nor were other and higher thoughts forgotten ; two noble hospitals healed the sick, or relieved the incurable ; a magnificent palace opened its doors day and night to the houseless and destitute poor ; and a single noble of the house of Fieschi, who had died childless, had bequeathed an immense palace and estate to receive and dower five hundred young and poor girls. The scenery, from the sea-shore and the flowery meadows, up into the mountain passes, was various and beautiful. Lovely fertile valleys, full of flowers and woods, running up to the foot of fantastic rocks and overhanging hills crowned with castles ; groves and avenues of thickly-planted chestnut trees lined the roads.

In this earthly paradise, then, Mr. Hendre fancied that he could pass the rest of his days, in quiet content if not in happiness. Every tie which bound him to his native country was severed by the death of his child. Occupation, which he delighted in, he could find plenty of in Genoa. He had the *entrée* into the best society of the place. The fathers of the Augustine

monastery near his house, those of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, and of other religious houses, mild and courteous men of the world, imbued with the polished indifference of the age, were pleasant and unexacting companions. The high-bred, educated, and melancholy Englishman became a favourite in the Genoese society, and his wife the especial pet of the fathers of the religious orders. Her nature, the one of all others to charm the clerical mind, and her strange and romantic delusion, excited the greatest interest among the religious classes. The most favoured and intimate of these fathers undertook gently to wean her from her delusion, from her Cambrian home, from her English heresy. In the last of these, as far as outward observance went, they soon succeeded. There were, of course, in those days no Protestant services in Italy, and the Hendres attended without scruple, and doubtless with comfort, the services of the Roman Communion. But in the two first they utterly failed. "It is true," they said, "your child is dead—you acknowledge that nature and sense are against you; nevertheless, do not despond, nature and the Good God are very kind. Your child is an angel in the city of God; in the cities of earth, and in this beautiful city around your feet, are many children, infants of the Good God as well as yours. Be a mother to these; we will find numbers of lovely children to touch your tender heart, and to receive blessing from your heaven-sent hand; and beside one child already in heaven, you shall have hundreds more, who shall enter heaven through you!" It was all in vain.

Not all these smooth and pleasant words, not all the delights of that wonderful city, not even the sense of alms-deeds, could keep her from that simple northern home, and from her child. Go forth among the poor she did. The *Albergo des pauvres* and the *conservatoire* of the children knew her well, as she came followed by her servants laden with gifts; and, still more, when seated by the beds of the poor and sick, or surrounded by the children, she tended the wants of the first, and told the others the story of her child in the grave.

And so, in the *Albergo of the Poor*, and in the palaces of the rich, in the houses of the religious, and among the little children, this child's influence still was felt. This strange child, that was dead and yet alive, who was lying underneath the sod of a hillside in Wales, yet was talked of, and wondered at, and made its existence felt, in the saloons and boudoirs of that stately city by the sea, and amongst the pastures and hill passes that led up between the vineyards into Lombardy; this little child whose earthly memory lived so long after him—this child in the grave.

But more than all, on his mother's mind, perpetually dwelling on its lovely child-nature, did that nature, elevated and idealised by her own, work the most; and her soul, led on by divine mercy and the works of love, became more and more strengthened in goodness and purer in heart from all self-will and sin. For, when she reverently read of those angels that once sat in an empty tomb, and thought angels were surely sitting in that tomb, far away at Trefalen, where

her child was, drawn there by its child-nature, so like, she thought, to their own, it made her strive more and more, and succeed more and more as she strove, to make her own nature resemble that child-nature (as she fancied it, and as indeed it was); so that, in some future time, should angels come and sit by her, they also should be drawn by her nature, purified and fashioned like her child's. And He also whom that empty tomb could not hold—He with the pale alluring face—might not He too, some calm and summer night, when the soft moonlight lighted all the wood, and the little church, and the dingle, and the distant hills and sea—might not He even, as in these Popish countries He was said . . . but her reverent heart did not finish the thought, neither will we.

At last, drawn by some mysterious power which she could not resist, and to which her husband yielded, they came back to England. France being still closed to them, they returned through Germany, and saw the mines of the Hartz Mountains, everything connected with such pursuits still attracting the squire. They travelled north through Staffordshire, where the mines were already extensive, and by the iron-works in Shropshire, where the Darbys had just completed the famous bridge. A few days more passed, and they were at home.

And now a settled desire, which some might call self-will and even sin, filled the mother's heart. This was to have the grave once more opened, and to see her child again. She did not

obtain this desire without some difficulty : the squire resisted it, the vicar resisted it, all her friends entreated her to renounce the thought. That wonderful patient persistency which she possessed, joined to the resistless sweetness which subdued all wills to hers, again overcame all obstacles. All the objections vanished, and the day was fixed. It was impossible this time to keep the matter a secret, nor does it appear to have been attempted. The excitement among the ignorant and superstitious people was immense. What they expected no one knew, but an undefined expectation there certainly was—an expectation encouraged by a belief in the supernatural and the unseen, held from childhood, and connected with all the petty incidents of their simple life. All the friends of the family were present—Lord Penryn, Sir Roger Mostyn of Trelacre, Squire Pennant of Downing, the great writer. The scene in the little valley is described as extraordinary beyond description : the wild overhanging rocks and dwarfed oaks, the rushing mountain torrent, the hazel bushes and white thorn, which was then in flower, the knots of peasantry, and the miners perched on every point of rock and filling the churchyard ; high up the little church and belfry, with the ancient yew trees, crowning the rocky bank against the sky, the horses of the gentry picqueted at the gate. The old sexton of his own accord had retired into the belfry, and the solemn tolling of the bell filled the air between the rocks.

The tomb was opened, and the lid of the coffin was again raised. Whether the previous opening

had done its work, or from whatever other cause I cannot say, but the progress of decay had been as rapid as it had been previously slow: there was nothing in the coffin but a little dust.

All eyes, from my Lord Penryn and Sir Roger Mostyn to the meanest collier, were turned to Madame Hendre's face, as she stood before the open grave, expecting some strange and fearful consequence upon this crushing proof of the futility of all her hopes. But what they saw was very different from what all expected: a radiant happiness was overspread upon her thin and worn face, the calm and satisfied smile of possession hovered on her lips, her eyes were fixed not on the grave, but on the sky. "I was right—all these long years I have been right—my child is *not* dead." And, sliding more and more from her husband's arm, she fell across the coffin, and when they raised her the life was gone. Surely in that supreme and final moment her blind and earthly instinct was illumined by a diviner light; and who shall say what ecstatic vision was given her of her child—*not* in the grave.

THE FORDHAMS OF SEVERNSTOKE

A CHRISTMAS STORY

SOME years ago there stood, not far back from the road that leads from Chipping Norton to Evesham, a very old mossy brick house. It stood alone in the fields, sheltered by a little wooded hill. It had a formal quaint garden on one side of it, separated from the fields by a sunk fence and a low yew hedge, and behind it, skirting the wooded hill, was a walled kitchen garden. This house had belonged to one family for more than four hundred years. They had taken rank among the smaller gentry of the county, and in the village church, half a mile over the fields, were several monuments which showed that the name of Fordham had not been unheard in the pulpit, the bar, or the battlefield.

Some twenty years ago this house was the frequent home of a very bright happy group of cousins. There was the family of the master of the house himself, several fine girls and boys; there were the children of the rector of the family living, their uncle, and they were not a few; and there were several other families of cousins, living in country houses scattered within twenty miles

of the country round. It was not in the nature of things that so large a company of cousins, being thrown together through the long days of summer and the nights of winter, riding together through the long lanes and over the breezy commons, meeting the fresh wind blowing straight from the tops of the green woods, should not fall in love; and accordingly they did so, and many a sweet and tender recollection of the old house, and the gardens, and the wood where the pigeons used to coo, and of the high clumps of trees in the fields before the house where the rooks used to build, did the boy cousins carry away with them when, afterwards, as many of them were, they were dispersed all over the earth, both at sea and on land, in search of their fortunes.

It was very pleasant while it lasted, but the end came all too soon. The first breaking up of any family is a sorrowful and touching thing, and all the more so when it is the waking up out of such happiness and such pleasant dalliance as this. The boys grew up and went into the army or abroad. Some went to Oxford, and afterwards to the law courts in London, and they came back periodically, but with changed feelings and ideas. The rector died, and the rectory was occupied by one of his nephews, for the head of the family could not spare the living for one of his sons. Nor was the dispersion only that of distance: an estrangement took place amongst those who were formerly so attached. The girls married differently; one or two of them, those of the elder branches, married gentlemen of fortune; one married a rich tradesman of the neighbouring

town ; the rector's daughters went out as governesses ; and one of them (worst of all) married a Methodist minister. The rector's eldest son, in holy orders, who thought he might have succeeded to his father's living, was a curate at a village not far off, at a stipend of a hundred a year.

Years had passed, ten or fifteen years, and the estrangement which had existed among this family began to diminish, though as yet there were no outward signs of it. As each of them advanced to the battle of life, the small misunderstandings and differences which had subsisted between them seemed of less account.

The heir of the family, George Fordham, who had by this time succeeded to the estate, was approaching middle age—thirty-five or forty—a fine, handsome country gentleman, very kind to the poor, very great on the Justice bench, very terrible to poachers, loyal to the backbone to Church and State. He bore no enmity to any one, least of all to his relatives, and had already made overtures of friendliness to some of them, not entirely without success.

The son of the old rector, the curate at a hundred a year, so won his patron's heart that, on the death of the incumbent, the living was bestowed upon him, and his two sisters gave up their situations as governesses and came to live with him.

The rich manufacturer proved very useful to one of the gentlemen of fortune in an election, in which he (the gentleman of fortune) was returned solely through his influence. The Methodist minister still remained the most obnoxious, but

it began to be observed that he kept himself very quiet, and preached against poaching as much as the justices could do.

This was the state of things at the time my story begins. On the whole, the fire of cordiality was smouldering, and only wanted a chance spark to set it in a blaze. This chance soon occurred.

One of the Fordhams of the elder branch (a younger brother of George Methuin Fordham of Severnstoke), who was a very high-spirited, reckless young man, had begun life in a marching regiment, and had carried his pair of colours into Canada; there, not liking the restraint of the service, he sold out, and wandered for several years over the whole of North and South America, never writing home, and sometimes engaged in very questionable situations. At one time, digging for gold in California; at another, building a log hut in a Canadian forest; at another, foreman of some mines in the Andes; and, it was whispered, even once connected with a party of filibusters. But through all he had preserved very much of his honest English nature, and entirely his love of his English home; and, at last, turning his eyes in the direction of his native country, early in December he arrived at Southampton, and immediately came down into the country.

He slept at Deddington, some fifteen miles from Severnstoke, and, despising English luxuries, set off the next day to walk to his home. It was a very cold day, the sky dark and lowering, but there was no snow. The long dark lines of the leafless hedges, and the bare brown woods, lay

before him as he drew nearer to the old house. Everything was very still and calm, and he had full leisure to indulge in his recollections of that pleasant past time. Every step of the way was well known to him, and reminded him of some pleasant incident of that time—the woods, the fields, the streams, the long road edged with the wayside grass now white with the hoar-frost, the little wayside inns, everything came pleasantly before him, all pointing lovingly back into that old time.

There are the fields close round the house, and there it stands, dark and grey, with volumes of white smoke rising up out of its many chimneys against the brown wooded hill. High above it, in the air, wheel round and round the clamorous rooks. A little farther, and he would have reached the lodge gates. There is a stile on his left hand, and a path leading across the fields,—a handsome-looking gentleman with a gun and two fine dogs; the wanderer stops suddenly in the middle of the road, gazing at this simple apparition as if he was fascinated. The gentleman also stops, looks at him too for a moment, drops his gun most carelessly, springs over the stile, and comes forward with both hands held out.

“Dick! dear old fellow! come back at last! just in time for Christmas, eh?”

He was a hardened, reckless fellow, this poor wanderer, but the tears streamed down his face as he grasped his brother’s kindly welcoming hands.

“And now,” said Mr. Fordham, after he had presented his brother (in whose demeanour, in

spite of his roughness, were very evident the gentle manners that became a Fordham) to his lady and his three rosy children—"now we will have all the old lot, they and theirs, this Christmas, and spend such a Christmas as the old house has not seen these dozen years. Henry, and Edward Keynton, who is his lieutenant, are with their regiment at Cheltenham, and there are two or three of the lawyers at Severnsthorne, and we'll have Thomas Fordham and his sisters from Woodcote Rectory, and I'll find out the Methodist parson myself and ask him and his wife; and there is cousin Boscombe of Wotton—he's a peevish, discontented man, and I hardly ever see him, but I daresay he'll come."

So the Squire took great pains, as he said he would, to bring all his relations together at Christmas time, and in this he was very successful, everybody promising to come. The Squire found out the Methodist minister himself, and persuaded his brother, the Rector of Severnstoke, to accompany him. The company were bidden for Christmas Eve, and accordingly, in the afternoon of the 24th of December, they began to arrive.

There had been a slight fall of snow in the morning, and the sky was black and lowering, and threatened more. They came in a variety of ways. There were the carriages of the gentry,—Aylesby Quinton of Severnsthorne, Esq., M.P., and his party, who had married one of Mr. Fordham's sisters, and whom the rich manufacturer had helped in his election; the Keyntons of Keynton, and the Whitehursts of Fonholt, who also had married sisters of the Squire; and Francis

Pecham of Eastwood, the Squire's uncle. But the carriage of the rich manufacturer was far grander than any of them, being one blaze of armorial bearings and gold. The Rev. Mr. Fordham of Woodcote and his sisters came in a pony chaise, a very elegant little thing; and the Methodist minister and his wife and son and daughter came in a very old-fashioned double-bodied chaise.

Then all that afternoon might be seen a most wonderful sight, more especially when the company came into the drawing-room before dinner. The fine young lawyers and officers talking amicably with the wife and daughter of the Methodist minister, and the Squire's lady, who was grand-daughter of an Earl, turning over engravings with his son. And, still more wonderful, the Rev. Augustine Bernard and his cousin the Rector of Woodcote engaged in friendly talk with the Methodist minister himself. The Rev. Augustine Bernard! who had an embroidered altar cloth and wax candles in his church, and services on all Saints' days and holy days, who had all the old pews taken down and replaced with open seats, and who had erected, with the help of his brother, a screen and font of the most "severe taste"! And these clergymen (who were such "high Anglicans" that the ministers of the little dissenting chapels in their villages did little else but preach against them as followers of the "beast and the scarlet woman") not only talked amicably with the dissenter, but found that on many subjects they thought wonderfully alike; and the Methodist minister found, to his astonish-

ment, that the high churchmen knew quite as much about the poor of their parishes as he did of his. And all these wonderful things happened because Richard Fordham came home from abroad; or rather, let us say, because of that blessed Christmas spirit in which all men equally put their trust, and whose influence makes the whole world own its kinship, the rich and the poor, the wise and the simple, the highly and the lowly born.

"There is one face I miss," said somebody, as dinner was coming to a close, "William Boscombe, whom we used to see here." The Squire gave a start. "I have forgotten him," he said. "I sent him a letter to ask him to come, and have had no answer. He was always a morose and discontented man, and since his wife, my cousin, died I have seen very little of him. I am sorry that he should not be here to-morrow; he is the one of all of us who most stands in need of such a meeting as this. I will ride over to Wotton this evening, it is not far, and see why he does not come."

There was a general exclamation of discouragement at this; but the Squire was resolved to carry out his whim to the full, and telling his brother Richard to take his place at the table, he left the room, to change his dress and order his horse, and one of his hacks being brought round, he mounted and rode away. By this time it was very nearly dark, but a faint light, which seemed to come from the horizon and to diffuse itself over the earth under the blackness and clouds above, showed that the snow had begun

to fall thickly in large flakes, and, as the Squire rode down the drive, he could see that the wheel-marks of the carriages which had brought his guests were already covered. As he rode along he thought over what he had not chosen to tell the company at the dinner-table, but which, if he had told them, might have lessened their surprise at his riding out ten miles that dreary night after a man who had refused to answer a friendly invitation. William Boscombe's wife had been the Squire's favourite cousin, and many of the pleasant recollections which filled his mind when he thought of his old house were connected with her. The young lady had no fortune, and both of them knew that their friends would never consent to their marriage, so nothing had ever taken place between them but a little innocent flirtation; nevertheless, when William Boscombe came to court his cousin, which was before his own marriage, the Squire looked upon him with something of the jealousy of a lover. He had never liked him, and on more than one occasion there had been a slight quarrel, and the coolness between them had never been cleared away. In the hurry of his guests' arrival the Squire had not noticed William Boscombe's absence, but when it was mentioned, all the recollections of this difference came upon him, and he felt that their family reconciliation would not be complete while his own particular offence remained unforgiven.

He thought upon all these things as he rode on through the fast-falling snow, past Cornwell and Kingham, till he came to the bridge over the

Evenlode, before you come to Churchill. It was now very dark and intensely cold, and the snow fell faster than ever, so that it was already more than a foot deep. The great darkness was owing to the falling snow, for when it ceased a little, now and then, he could see all the woods and houses as he passed them covered with the beautiful white snow. As he passed through Churchill the town was very still, but many of the houses were cheerfully lighted, and he could see the shadow of the holly and mistletoe branches on the window-blinds, and figures moving across them. He thought of his own home, and put spurs to his horse; as he passed by the church the clock struck seven. A mile and a half farther and he came to Wotton, where Mr. Boscombe lived. On the top of the hill is the church, and a house by it that was formerly the rectory, but the incumbent residing at another living, the house was let, and Mr. Boscombe had rented it for many years. It was an old house, with a stone wall before it and a gate. The servant appeared amazed to see a visitor. "Mr. Boscombe was very ill indeed; the doctor had just left, and there was no hope. Would Mr. Fordham go up? Mr. Boscombe had mentioned his name. The curate, Mr. Norgrave, was with him."

The Squire went up into his room, an old-fashioned room with dark heavy furniture. The curate of the parish was standing at the farther side of the bed, and his housekeeper, an old servant devotedly attached to the family, stood at the foot. Mr. Fordham went up to the bedside.

"I am sorry to find you so ill, William," he said; "I was come to fetch you to my house, to a friendly Christmas gathering."—"You come too late, George Fordham; I was bidden to another gathering before your letter came. But I am very glad you are going to meet. It is a very blessed thing, this Christmas charity. I see my life very differently now from what I ever did before,—I would I could live it over again." He paused and then went on again: "But it is very kind of you to come here, George—very kind; and it is a bad night too, they tell me,—is it so?"—"Yes," replied Mr. Fordham quietly, "it is a bad night; it is very cold and the snow is falling very thick." There was a pause. The clergyman, who had been waiting, began to read the prayers for the sick. The old housekeeper sat down in a corner and buried her face in her apron. Mr. Fordham stood still on the other side of the bed, bowing his head reverently. While the prayers were being read the sick man's hand kept wandering over the bed-clothes. He did not seem to listen to what was being read, but to be murmuring something to himself that rested on his mind. When the clergyman ceased, he roused himself a little and said, "Read the third collect." The curate turned over the leaves quickly and read, "Lighten our darkness we beseech thee, O Lord, and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night, for the love of Thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ." "From all perils and dangers of this night," wandered the dying man; "George Fordham—from all perils and dangers of this

night,—this night, George Fordham! when it is so very cold, and the snow falls very thick.”

As he spoke of the cold without, the exceeding cold of death overcame him, and the clergyman on one side of the bed, and George Fordham on the other, both looked down upon a corpse.

“If I am to get home at all I must go at once,” George Fordham said to the curate; “it is a terrible night.”

When they went outside, what with the darkness of the night and the snow, they could not see a yard before them. Mr. Fordham’s horse was brought round, and he mounted and rode off. The clergyman looked after him—he could only see him for about two seconds—and as he turned back into the house for his hat and coat, he muttered, “If he ever gets home at all, it will be through the infinite mercy of God!” As Mr. Fordham rode out of the gate, where the ostler was standing with a lantern, there was a distant ringing sound in the air, and he asked the man what it was. “It is the clock at Churchill, sir, striking eight.” Mr. Fordham turned his horse’s head towards his home; but the snow fell so fast, and was frozen so hard as it fell, and lay so thick on the ground, that it was with great difficulty that his horse, though the best hack in his stable, would face it. Mr. Fordham felt the cold pierce him through and through, and the icy sleet beat down upon him and lash into his face. A feeling of numbness, of dizziness, and of unutterable wretchedness came over him, and a strange uncertainty as to where he was. Whether he was sleeping or waking he could not tell. From this

state he was roused by the lights at Churchill, and he drew rein at the bright windows of the inn, staggered into the bar, and asked the astonished host for something hot. "Brandy and water—anything."—"Squire Fordham! what ill-luck has brought your worship out such a night as this! you surely won't go on."—"I must go on," the Squire said. "I have been up to Mr. Boscombe's, who is dead."—"Dead!" muttered the host under his breath; "it is an awful night for a man to die on." Then, speaking louder, he pressed Mr. Fordham at least to take a chaise. "No, he would take no post-boys out in such a night," the Squire said, "least of all on Christmas Eve; he felt warmer now and should do very well"; and he mounted and rode off against the driving snow. The snow fell thicker and felt colder than before; he could neither hear nor see anything, and struggled on blindly, hardly knowing where he went. Once he thought of turning back, but the recollection of his friends' anxiety at home caused him to struggle on. He was conscious that he was descending the hill towards the bridge over the Evenlode, and he kept his horse, as near as he could tell, in the middle of the road, that he might not miss the bridge. He could just see the snow-covered parapet on his right hand, and urged his horse, as he thought, up the ascent of the bridge. The animal made a plunge forward through the thick snow—then a wild neigh and a struggle, and horse and rider went down, head foremost, into the frozen river beneath. The Squire fell undermost—the horse remained motionless upon him. He was dimly conscious for a moment of

the snow falling, falling, falling thicker and more thick, and covering him, feet deep, with a white shroud, then all consciousness left him, and he fell into a slumber as cold and fast as that of death itself.

Now let us see what strange thing had happened at Severnstoke.

After Mr. Fordham had ridden away the company left the grand dining-room and went into what was called the oak room, which adjoined it. It was a small room, panelled with oak black with age, and had a very high carved chimney-piece also of oak, round which the company seated themselves. The absence of the host, on such a gloomy evening, made them feel sad and dull, and the reports brought in from time to time of the increasing wildness of the night did not much enliven them. They began to talk of dreary winter nights and of the dismal tales connected with them—of men and women being snowed up and lost on barren moors; of dreadful sounds and sights seen by those who had cause to ride by night; of mysterious horsemen riding up suddenly by the traveller's side and disclosing some hideous countenance or tale; of wild huntsmen encountered in great parks or chases; and one of the lawyers told how a friend of his, riding home late, or rather early, one winter's night from a hunting dinner, when there was a hard black frost, but no snow, heard for a long time the tramp of a horse, through the black stillness, coming to meet him. And how, just as he reached a long old bridge over a deep river, there met him, on the middle of the bridge,

a man, mounted on a tired horse, and bearing a dead body before him, which he made as if he would throw into the stream. And how, when he saw the gentleman ride up to him, he dropped the body on the bridge, and passed by the other like a whirlwind, in spite of his tired horse. And how it was supposed he must have brought the body very many miles through many counties, for, though the gentleman gave information in the morning to a justice, and the matter was taken up, yet the body was never claimed. And how, many years afterwards, a man, dying in a small town in some distant county, confessed himself guilty, with others who were then dead, of the murder, and told a dreadful tale of riding through the dark night with the dead horror before him on his saddle-bow, through the silent villages and towns, and past the churches, whose clocks seemed to cry out after him when they struck; and how, when his hateful task was nearly done, when he thought he had ridden far enough, and was going to rid himself of his horrid burden over the parapet of a bridge, there met him a fiend, riding on a coal-black horse, and clothed all in flame (which was the gentleman's scarlet hunting coat), and how he was scared almost to death, and fled away beyond the seas.

Though there might be some slight element of the ludicrous in this tale, yet the frightfulness of it so far preponderated, that the company were very still and scared after it, and they sat for a long while quiet, no one venturing to tell any more stories. A heavy dreariness pressed down upon

them, and they felt a fear stealing over them of they did not know what. At last some one spoke. "George will be back soon, I should think," he said; "what o'clock is it?"—"Just eight." The words were hardly spoken before the whole company felt a sudden chill, as though the door had opened and some one had come in out of the night, bringing a cold blast of frozen air with him. Most of them sprang up and turned round, and there, a little way from them, by a table, stood William Boscombe as plainly as he had ever stood in life. There was nothing fearful in his aspect, nevertheless the company were struck motionless by some nameless horror. He moved up towards the fire, the company giving back to let him pass.

"It is a very cold night," he said; "George Fordham will be here anon—he has left my house."

The voice was as nearly as possible his ordinary voice, but there was this peculiarity in it, that it did not seem to be formed in his mouth, but to come from him without any effort on his part. "Did you meet him, then?" some one said—no one ever knew afterwards who it was. "No, I did not meet him." It seemed as if they were obliged to speak, the silence was so terrible; and another said, "Will you come to the fire?" "No, I cannot stay, I am waited for in another place; but you had better send some one forward to meet George Fordham at Evenlode bridge this night—this night when it is so very cold, and the snow falls very thick—very thick—very thick." The last words seemed to be repeated three or

four times somewhere in the room, fainter and fainter every time, and each time the figure before them grew less and less distinct, till at last it faded away utterly, and the sounds ceased, and they were alone in the dark oak-panelled room.

There was a profound stillness in the room for several minutes ; every one seemed waiting to hear his neighbour breathe. The Methodist minister spoke at last. "This is a message from the dead," he said, "like those of which Baxter and Cotton Mather and other holy men of old writ. No time should be lost in obeying it."

He turned as he spoke, for Richard Fordham, who had left the room unperceived, now came back with his hat and dreadnought coat on, and a lantern in his hand. "I am ready to go," he said, "who will come with me?"

And the two officers volunteered, and the Rev. Augustine Bernard also came forward.

"I am rector of this parish," he said, "and my post is foremost in any danger of this kind."

Mr. Fordham's own groom asked leave to accompany them, and they set out down the drive. The snow fell faster than ever ; just round the lantern they could see the falling flakes—that was all. It was impossible for the eye to pierce the intense darkness, which the falling snow made greater than on the darkest night. In a few minutes they were all covered with snow an inch thick. In this way they struggled on, being guided by a faint halo in the direction of the lantern, which the groom carried a little ahead. More by chance than anything else, or shall we

say, more by the merciful Providence of God, they kept the right road.

Sometimes, when they passed a small wood or plantation, they could see a faint shape or outline rising up, and by this the groom made out the road. It is impossible to describe the helpless feeling of that desolate silence. The loudest shout would not penetrate a hundred yards through that dense atmosphere of falling snow. They had gone in this way about two hours, and were beginning to despair, when the snow seemed to be falling less thickly, and it grew lighter, and immediately afterwards they heard a clock strike before them.

"That must be Churchill clock," said the groom; "we are coming down upon the bridge."

From the place where they were they could see on either hand, by the increased light, a high plantation, and the groom placed them, as nearly as he could, in the middle of the road, between the two woods. "If we can get in the middle and keep on in a straight line," he said, "we may hit the bridge; else we shall go over into the river, which God keep the Squire from having done already."—"I and the groom will go on first," said Richard Fordham. "Stay here till we have found the bridge; we will shout when we have found it—or something else," he muttered to himself.

They stood there some ten minutes, though it seemed longer, with a dread anxiety upon them, stamping and beating themselves as well as they could, for the snow was frozen upon them an inch thick. They watched the lantern go on in a

straight line, or nearly so, down the sloping road that led to the bridge; then they saw it hesitate, wave up and down, and wander to and fro; suddenly it made a descent, and the next instant they saw it violently agitated up and down, as if to attract attention, and they heard Richard Fordham's strong voice shouting through the darkness, "Come on! come on, all of you! he is down in the river's bed!"

Three days afterwards George Fordham was as well as he was before he took that dismal night ride, and William Boscombe's body was buried on New Year's Day in his village church.

Requiescat in Pace!

A SUNDAY AFTERNOON¹

It was the smoke-room of a Welsh castle, after lunch on Sunday. Three of the numerous easy-chairs were drawn round the small fire. It was a fine day towards the end of a fine September, but there is, especially when one has attained to a certain period of life, something in an easy-chair more in accordance with the after-lunch tobacco than there is in lounging about on terraces and garden-seats, and two of the occupants of the easy-chairs had more than attained to this period of life. The man who sat to the left, facing the fireplace, and who was evidently the master of the house, was a tall, fine-looking man, Sir Frederick Chevenix Pole, perfectly English in type, fair-haired and fresh-coloured, with strongly cut features, indicative of a firm purpose and will. Next to him, between his two companions, sat a man of about seventy years of age, of a striking and, one might almost say, fascinating appearance. His short white hair and grey moustache, according with his perfectly cut features, might have accounted for this attraction, but there was more than this. There was a distinction in his cold grey eyes, born of the habit of command and of the conscious possession

¹ From the *English Illustrated Magazine*.

of power, physical, mental, and conferred; a consciousness that gave an expression of beneficence and courtesy because supported by the sense of authority which made the one possible of instant fulfilment and the other assured and safe. He was, there could be no doubt, a general officer in high command. The third chair was pushed back somewhat farther from the fire, as though the occupant did not need its warmth. He was scarcely more than a boy—a young man of barely three-and-twenty—Sir Frederick's only child, married within three months. He was as tall as his father, but much handsomer, giving promise, indeed, of becoming in a few years what used to be called "a beauty man." He had dark hair and unusually clear and piercing eyes, and, what he doubtless inherited from his dead mother, strikingly delicately cut nose and mouth.

Sir Frederick was evidently in a very bad humour. He lay back in his chair, his eyes fixed upon the fire, taking no pleasure from the cigar which, from the mere necessity of keeping it alight, he from time to time put to his lips.

"It is all very well," he was saying, "for Plynlmmon and Cader and such great men to say that it does not matter, and that nothing has happened. I say that everything has happened, and that it matters very much. I say that it is revolution!"

The other men continued to smoke calmly, looking into the fire. It seemed better to let Sir Frederick relieve his mind without interposing irritating remarks.

"To me," he went on, "to me, who care for every blade of grass upon the land, who, and my fathers before me, have done for these people infinitely better than they would have done for themselves, I say that it matters very much, and that everything has happened—that it is simply revolution. Look at the County Councils, and now Parish Councils! Am I to sneak in by a dozen votes or so, and be insulted and out-voted every time I propose anything the like of which my fathers have done for centuries for the people and for the land?"

It was quite too sore a subject to irritate further, and the other men remained discreetly silent.

"Look at Sir Corwen," Sir Frederick went on, talking more to himself than to the others, "I don't know what has come over Wales during the last ten or fifteen years. Only a few years ago they used to talk, all over Wales, of 'God and Sir Corwen.' Who talks of that now? Who talks of God at all?"

Of a family resident in Wales for centuries, but of almost pure English descent for all that length of time, and marrying with all the great English families, Sir Frederick was of Wales, and yet not Welsh. He did not speak Welsh himself. It was not the fashion to do so in his youth. His son had been taught the language, and spoke it sometimes to the farmers and peasantry, but he did it with constraint and apparent condescension, and it had not the slightest good effect, but rather the reverse.

"God knows," Sir Frederick began again, "I

don't want to insult these people. I never have insulted them. I have done them all the good I could ; but you know what I mean."

"It is just the same in India," said the General, in his courteous, suave way. "We never know but that any post may bring us some insane orders from the British Parliament."

"Here is Felix there," continued Sir Frederick, thus encouraged, "they want him to stand for the county. Plynlmmon says that it is our duty. I say, No—I won't have him beaten by a tallow-chandler."

"He isn't a tallow-chandler, Dad," said the young man in a cheery, pleasant, ringing voice from his remote chair. "He is a great soap-manufacturer, who employs tens of thousands of workmen, and has built a town for them on the most approved system. He will be made a baronet if the Gladstonians stick in."

"He is an insolent cad," replied his father with great asperity, "to set himself against the Plynlmmon and the Chevenix Pole influence. Look at Sir Corwen, who spends half of his income for the good of his people, and they all vote against him ! Look at Cader, who gives all his labourers fancy cottages at a pound a year, and keeps the hedges and the gardens in order as well, and they all vote against him !"

There was a long pause ; iniquity like this did not admit of discussion.

"And, what is worse," Sir Frederick said at last, after he had satisfied himself that his cigar was alight, "this tallow-chandler will get in ! I think I can depend on old Thompson. He is the

butler, General, and was my father's man. But I'll be hanged if I don't believe that the London footmen would vote against me if they got the chance! The effect of this demoralising influence upon people of very good disposition is amazing."

There was another slight pause; then Sir Frederick began again—

"I tell you, Felix, you shall not stand! I won't have Felix Chevenix Pole beaten by a little red-haired Welshman."

"He isn't little, Dad," replied the boy, "and he isn't red-haired. He is not far short of my height, and he has black hair. As for Welshman, what are we?"

"You seem to know a great deal about him," said his father shortly, and ignoring the last question. "Where have you seen him?"

"I have seen him with the Flintshire Hunt. He rides fairly well to hounds."

What Sir Frederick might have answered to this will never be known, for at this moment the door opened and another actor appeared upon the scene.

"Felix," said a sweet, silvery voice, "I am going to the three o'clock children's service. Will you come with me?"

"Come with you!" cried the young man, springing up. "Where would I not come with you, my love!"

The other men had risen also.

"May I come too?" said the General. "I should like to hear the little children sing."

He was looking from one to the other with an amused, beneficent, surprised delight, and,

indeed, at the latest comer he might well look—a tall, fair, grey-eyed English girl, with a perfect complexion and clear-cut profile and mouth, “A daughter of the gods, divinely fair,” from whose girlish form the honours of her recent wifehood had as yet taken no single grace. A girl with whom, one would think, a man would go anywhere—even to church!

“Oh, the children don’t sing much!” she said. “They are too little, but the choir-boys’ voices are very sweet, and they sing such lovely hymns.”

“You will excuse me, my dear,” said Sir Frederick, as he kissed his new daughter on the forehead, “I have been to church once to-day, and I am not fit to hear little children sing. I am not in a Christian frame of mind.”

They went out into the great hall. As he passed Felix took his father’s hand—

“Don’t worry, Dad,” he said; “what does it matter? There is a boy in Terence who calls to his father, ‘O festivissime Pater.’ I always used to think of you when I blundered over that at Eton.”

The great hall was surrounded by high leaded windows and dim portraits. There were masses of harpalium, single dahlias, and tritomas in china and delf jars; there was also a faint scent of mignonette.

As near as he could get to the centre of the hall stood a small pug-dog, apparently in an aggrieved and injured frame of mind. He was evidently of a most distinguished breed, with a skin of a fine golden fawn colour, and brilliant

black eyes. He regarded his mistress with a look of reproach.

"You seem to have made your own arrangements," he clearly said. "Am I to come or not?"

"Oh, you may come, Beo," said his mistress. "You will stay in the porch, you know, during the service."

The dog turned his back and walked towards the hall-door.

"I suppose I know how to behave," he said to himself.

Beo was an aristocrat to the backbone. He was fed on minced chicken, and slept in his mistress's room on a down pillow (his mistress said she slept in his room), but when he was turned out of the wagonette he would run for miles and never ask to be taken in.

They followed Beo out of the carved porch and down the carriage-drive, deep cut in the solid rock, with banks of hydrangea on either side, now varied with curious pale autumn tints, and great oaks and ashes upon the top, and on the rocky mounds overhanging the drive where the walls and bastions of the feudal castle had been.

There was a lofty square-built tower, covered with ivy, where the jackdaws and swallows lived, with great oaken gates studded with iron bands and nails, through which they passed by a small wicket and came out into the main street of the village, with an old high-arched bridge immediately opposite the gate, spanning a rushing torrent in its course from the hills to the neighbouring

sea. The village street, with pretty new-built shops standing in gardens, passed up the valley ; but opposite to the gateway and across the narrow bridge was another street of much older houses, leading up to the old Welsh church on the top of the hill.

Beo, evidently knowing, or thinking that he knew—the wisest of us are liable to be mistaken sometimes—exactly what was going to happen, walked in front and crossed the bridge with the intention of proceeding straight up to the church.

The first thing that disconcerted Beo as they came out from under the dark archway into the sunlight was a tame jackdaw, who, descending from one of the pillars at the bridge wall, came running towards him with much chattering and flapping of wings. Beo regarded this creature with the intensest disgust. His sentiments were precisely those of Sir Frederick Chevenix Pole. It was a sign of the general demoralisation of manners that a gentleman could not walk up the street of his own village without being subjected to such familiarities.

On the bridge were several young men and boys, lounging and smoking and talking. It might have comforted Sir Frederick somewhat to have seen that most of them touched their hats. We have not quite reached the lowest depth yet.

The party from the Castle crossed the bridge and began to ascend the steep old village street towards the parish church, which was their nearest way to the English church, built by Sir Frederick lower down the hill-slope, among the

villas and tennis-lawns of the English residents, on the verge of the park as it approached the sea.

They had not gone far up the street when their steps were arrested by the sound of soft music, melancholy and still, and yet at the same time with an odd sense of a lively strain underneath the solemn monotones ; a distinct and divergent sound, different from aught that lay around, different from anything to which their lives had hitherto seemed to lead ; a faint, slow movement, quaint and almost lively, yet touching and sad, that seemed to communicate itself to the warm, sunny air, and, together with it, to act upon the sense with a marvellously attractive power. They turned almost instinctively and stood by the stone walls of the garden plots, looking down upon the street and upon the bridge.

A Sunday rest and glamour pervaded the quiet scene. The warm afternoon sun was shining over the late roses and the fuchsias and white anemones in the cottage flower-beds, and on the rank growth of potatoes and cabbages and marrows in the gardens interspersed between the straggling houses. In the background were the massy woods and dark foliage of the Castle grounds, with the great feudal tower covered with ivy, all in flower, and traced here and there with tendrils of Virginia creeper stretching up through the dark green mass. The tame jackdaw came down again and stood in the very centre of the village street. He flapped his wings and seemed to be discoursing to an absent congregation ; being dressed in black, his action might

seem suggestive to the unthinking mind. At the cottage-windows and at the backs of the houses girls might be seen preparing themselves in their Sunday finery for the afternoon stroll, while their fathers and mothers, too busy or too lazy to change their clothes, were standing in garden and doorway in their everyday working dress. Small birds darted in and out, the rooks swept across the sky. The village cats, calmed apparently by the influence of the day and of the hour, sat dreamily and securely, with something of a Sabbath serenity, upon wall and window-sill, gazing with unwonted complacency upon the dogs that strolled past in the village street. Through all this still life the marvellously attractive notes penetrated the ear with irresistible force.

The loungers on the bridge, arrested apparently by these sounds, strolled listlessly up the street and stood at the entrance of a narrow passage or court from which the sounds seemed to come. The court was surrounded by some of the very oldest houses in the village. It was very narrow at the entrance, but opened a little afterwards into a quiet yard surrounded by stone cottages. The strollers from the bridge seemed to be somewhat sheepishly undecided, attracted apparently by the music, ashamed to show any marked interest in what was going on.

They were also exposed to a counter-attraction.

Some of the village girls, who had finished their toilette, now came out and joined them. One maiden went so far as to slap her friend jovially upon the back. The men did not seem

to heed; something in that faint yet piercing note seemed to draw them with its magic influence, as it had done those others, of so different a kind, farther up the hill. They moved off slowly one by one, and went up the narrow court. The village girls, disgusted at the desertion of their swains, went back into their gardens to bide their time.

"Let us go down," Claire said. "It is the Salvation singing, I think."

They moved down the steep street and stood at the entrance of the court, where the others had stood a moment before.

Beo strongly objected to this course. It was irregular, and to his well-regulated mind it did not seem that it was in good form. There was a stone step, or pavement, in front of a closed shop at the corner of the little alley. He seated himself upon this, with his back to the whole affair, and his gaze steadfastly fixed up the steep street towards the afternoon sky above, and towards the outline of the village church upon the crest of the hill.

An intense stillness pervaded the scene, scarcely broken by the strain of thin, wild music. The stone houses, worn and weather-stained, borrowed of the warm sunshine and of the rich autumn afternoon, and became to a certain extent mellowed and beautiful; and the pale, delicate sky accorded in its faded blue with the sombre colours of the houses and of the autumn gardens—with the quiet yard and with the mystic song, which no Eastern sunlight or fancy could have warmed into the tints and melodies of fable or romance.

As the Castle party stood in the main street, at the entrance to the alley, they could see, beyond the group of men who were standing some little way up the narrow entry, the small court of houses, which seemed almost uninhabited. An old woman or so appeared now and then at the upper windows, and gazed with apparent indifference upon the scene below. An indescribable sense of peace and mystery pervaded this quiet yard.

In the open space between the small houses were three girls, in the orthodox Salvation dress, and two men.

The girls were singing, and had small tambourines in their hands. They accompanied their singing with the very faintest beating of the tambourines in time. In addition to this faint beating of the time, they executed at the interval of every few seconds the very slightest rhythmical movement of their position and pose—a movement so slight as to be scarcely perceptible, yet possessing an enthralling and suggestive effect ; for this faint, graceful movement gave a reality and a touch of human feeling, as in the grandest music there are cords which suggest street and village life, and in dance and pantomime airs there are strains and adagios which recall the great music of the Mass.

What these girls sang none of the Castle party knew, but not one of them doubted for a moment that it was some version of that strangely persistent story born among the villages of Galilee many hundred years ago.

After an interval of two or three minutes the

girls ceased singing, concluding their verses with a dance movement more marked than usual, and one of the men began a short address. He was a small, red-haired man, of an insignificant and common appearance. He spoke apparently to no one, for the group of men in the entry seemed too far off to constitute an audience, but he spoke with profuse action and earnestness, and in a full and rich tone of voice.

"He is consigning us all to hell-fire," said Felix, who was supposed to know Welsh, "but it does not matter. It is a melodious language, and the men's voices are rich and sweet."

When the elderly man had completed his sermon—and he spoke for a very short time—the girls sang again, and when they had finished a young man stepped forward and delivered an address, which seemed to be only a repetition of the elder speaker. Then the girls sang again with the same thin, sweet, searching note, with the same faint beating of the tambourines, with the same *svelte* movement of the limbs. Then they stopped altogether.

"Will they come out and walk the streets?" said Claire. "They have no audience here."

Felix shook his head. His knowledge of Welsh habits was small, of Salvation methods smaller still.

But when the girls had stopped singing the elder of the men took one of the tambourines from their hands and advanced towards the group standing in the entry. They apparently contributed something. Then he came a little farther, and stood for a second or two undecided, looking

at the group in the street. Felix, to encourage him, took out his purse. Then the man came forward cheerfully, with his head on one side and a wheedling smile upon his face. He held out the tambourine : there were several coins upon it—halfpence and pence. Each of the men gave him half-a-crown.

“I should like to see if they come out,” said Claire again ; “let us wait a minute and see.”

But nothing of the kind happened. When the man went back the service seemed to be over. He stooped, or almost knelt, before the others, and, producing the coins, arranged them in order upon the ground, so that all might see. Then the strange choir broke up, most of them apparently retiring into the houses around.

But one girl came down the court. She passed the group of men who were standing in the entry, and came out into the street. She was a striking-looking girl, in spite of her hideous bonnet and dress, and there was something about her look that seemed strange to the surroundings among which she stood.

Inspired, as it would seem, by a sudden instinct, Claire moved towards her.

“Your singing is very sweet,” she said, with her silvery distinct utterance. “We thank you very much,” and she held out her hand.

But the girl drew herself up. She fixed her steady eyes upon the striking group before her, and there was something in the glance of the dark eyes suggestive of the fact that such a group—not this one, but one not unlike it—was far from being an unfamiliar sight.

"Thanks, no," she said in perfect English, and with a refined accent and tone ; "thanks, no, my Lady ; I am a ruined girl," and she passed on down the village street.

There did not seem much to say after this as they went up the street to the old Welsh parish church upon the top of the hill.

The September light, which had been somewhat obscured in the valley, became brighter as they reached the crest of the hill, and a blaze of sunlight and, as it seemed, an unexpected day of space and sense awaited them as they crossed its ridge.

And, indeed, it could hardly seem surprising that Beo had steadfastly sat himself upon that corner flagstone with his eyes fixed upon the western sky and upon the low, suave lines of the Welsh church upon the hilltop, for the sight of man (or dog) has seldom seen anything more perfect in its way.

The western sun, travelling towards its grave in the sea, had passed beyond the church towards the right, and left behind it, in the sky which it had traversed, an intensely clear and delicate flush, against which the low roofs of the church stonework, wrought upon and tempered by the slowly passing centuries, and wreathed here and there with masses of creeping ivy, stood out in soft and yet distinctly cut outline and relief.

The churchyard was guarded by a fence of slate piles, fastened together by iron bands ; and the gate was a great slab-slate, girded with iron. Inside the churchyard the tombs were mostly of slate, with short inscriptions, one might almost

say, scratched upon them ; but here and there a great stone slab, moss-grown and coloured with age, and supported by small carved pillars of stone, marked the resting-place of some Welsh gentleman whom the perplexities of this life ceased to trouble two centuries ago. All over the churchyard, in among these pale slates and armorial stones, a profuse *mêlée* of Welsh flowers flung itself in masses and in single lines over the green sward and around the lettered stones, and over the broad tombs, which seemed, as it were, some strange reminiscence of the discarded altar of the past.

As they trode, with hushed senses, these quiet pathways of the dead, the stillness, as of a day sacred to peace, and the chime of the green hues of earth and the clear tints of Heaven, and the hand of time graciously at work through many winters, and through long summer days, softened the rude outlines of poverty and of death, and seemed to reduce (or is it elevate?) all men, from the castle or the village, by the magic of a common clay, to one fellowship and kin.

Great trees, ashes and oaks, lined the further wall of the churchyard, and another gate, also of slate, opened the way to a path which led down to the new church at the bottom of the hill.

Underneath the spreading branches of the trees, as they stood for a moment by the churchyard gate, great swallows swept past, almost touching them in their rapid flight ; through the overarching branches went a murmur and sound as of some spirit-whisper from above.

Beyond, the ground fell steeply down a sloping

field, and over the shimmer of delicate grass and the pale blue tint of small thistle-flowers, and the tall white spire of the English church and the woods, lay a waste of yellow sand, broken with channels and rivers of blue sea, and beyond this more blue sea, and then, faint in the misty glamour of the autumn afternoon, the distant shores.

To the left, where the hills sloped down into the park and the sea, the great trees and copses cast long shadows upon the grass in the quivering, slumberous air.

The General stopped for a moment, as if surprised.

"The sea is as blue," he said, "and the sand as yellow as at Capri itself."

A sense of consolation and of peace came over Claire's spirit, jarred and repelled as it had been.

"How beautiful it all is!" she said. "And the old village church, with its soft outline and its creepers and the mossy graves! General Lefevre," she went on with a sudden impulse, "you have been everywhere, and know everything. Tell me, why do Dissenters like everything that is ugly, and why are they so rude?"

"My dear!" said the General, "I am sure I cannot tell! I don't know anything. I was never taught anything but the Latin grammar, and that I wouldn't learn. I was sent into the Army because I was the fool of the family. 'He can stop a bullet,' my dear father used to say, 'if he can do nothing else.' And I didn't even do that," the General said with a smile. "In the hottest fire

I was never touched. They said I bore a charmed life. I am sure I cannot tell!"

By the time that they reached the English church, by the pathway over the field, they had loitered so long that the service was over, and the children were singing the final hymn :

We are but little children weak,
Nor born to any high estate ;
What can we do for Jesus' sake,
Who is so high and good and great ?

Oh, day by day each Christian child
Has much to do, without, within,
A death to die for Jesus' sake,
A weary war to wage with sin.

When deep within our swelling hearts
The thoughts of pride and passion rise,
When bitter words are on our tongues,
And tears of passion in our eyes ;

Then we may stay the angry blow,
Then we may check the hasty word,
Give gentle answer back to all,
And fight the battle of the Lord.

The shrill treble note, with a child's uncertainty, sang this lesson of human life, before whose stern realities it has been said that he is happy who is like a little child. The tears were in Claire's wonderful grey eyes.

"I heard that sung," she said, "in one of the smartest and most crowded churches in London. I never heard anything so touching in my life!"

So, there being nothing else to do, they went home by another way, past the gardens of the English residents and up the village street, where Beo was more comfortable in his mind. He had

been to church as a gentleman should, and most of the creatures had retired to sleep. They went in through the great portcullised gateway, past the banks of hydrangeas and the avenues of ashes and of oak. The massy doors stood open, under the porch with its carved armorial bearings, to the great silent hall, and Claire went in.

"What did you think of that girl?" said the General, as the two men stood for a moment on the sunny gravel outside the porch.

"Oh, I don't know," said the boy, with just a touch of assumption of supreme knowledge of the world. "Been in English service, I should say—lady's-maid, probably. Some fallen girl who has been reclaimed. The police tell us that these people do a lot of good."

"She reminded me," said the General, very slowly—and it struck Felix, with a sudden surprise, that his face was ashy pale—"she reminded me of a girl whom I knew many a long year ago. Do you think, Felix," he went on, and there was a strange humility in his tone in speaking to the boy, as to one possibly possessed of information later than his own—"do you think that there is anything in it all? Some of us will need God's mercy, one day, if there be."

EARLY POEMS

A SHADOW OF GEORGE HERBERT

THOU that in a dreary prison-house
Pensively dost sigh,
And in thy sorrow only longest,
Poor heart! to die,
Know this,
Thy God, within these dark bars, willeth
To bring thee bliss.

Believe thou, that this world,
So rich and rare,
And all the living things and flowers
Thou thought so fair,
Are nought
Save to the simple soul and pure
That God has taught.

For all the wisdom of the world,
And all its care,
And all its stepping-stones to Heaven,
As water unstable are.
Thy cell
Is large enough for thee to find thy way,
Aye! twice as well.

Then know, thou art within thy cell
As in a little cave,
(Far off from all that tempteth man,)
Thy soul to save ;
And see
That, by the mercy of thy God, thy cell
A palace rich may be !

THE LITTLE GRAVEYARD

ON the hillside, o'er the valley,
Open both to sun and shade,
To the hot sun, and the cold wind,
With the green grave-hillocks lined,
Is the little graveyard laid.

Just below it is the meeting
Ancient fashioned. 'Tis so still
We can hear the water flowing,
We can hear the oxen lowing,
At the bottom of the hill.

And above us is the blue sky
Shining through the fleeting clouds ;
And around us trees and bowers,
And below us grass and flowers,
And the dead men in their shrouds.

We see them not, we hear them not,
All around is bright and glad,
And the sunshine gaily dances,
And the shower-wet flower glances :—
What is it makes us sad ?

Not sad in our modern meaning,
But as our forefathers meant ;—
Nobler thought and higher feeling ;—
Heart-stirring o'er the spirit stealing,
Than outward objects lent.

What is it makes our tongues grow still,
Or but in whispers sound ?
What is it makes our feet move slowly ?
What have we found so grave and holy ?
Within that little ground.

O ! no outward object is it,
That our heart is moving thus,
'Tis spirit unto spirit speaking ;—
'Tis spirit, spirit-commune seeking ;—
This it is that moveth us.

For we feel, beyond the beauty
Of these earthly hills and flowers,
The working of a knowledge higher,
The influence of a presence, nigher
God,—than ours.

And we feel the certain knowledge
Of the mighty truth we hear,
Of a glorious world of bliss,
Of saints and angels numberless,
And feel them near.

And they seem no longer vanished
All the loved and passed away :
All the good of history's pages,
All the saints of all the ages,
We feel them near to day.

And our hearts reach out before us
To that awful day at last
When all the world beneath the sun,
The myriad tribes shall stand as one,
To answer for the past.

And the dear ones that lie buried,
Here—they are but few,
Shall rise up from the mouldy ground,
Shall arise and look around
On the hills they knew.

.
And shall such knowledge be in vain?
Shall such feelings fade away?
Rather let them lead us upward,
Rather let them lead us heavenward
To the perfect day!

MY WIFE'S VALENTINE

I

"DID you know Mamma?" you ask me,
Little Florence, "Is it true?"
And your bright eyes grow still brighter
At the thought so strange and new.

I can tell you, pretty Florence,
That the thought you've in your mind
Is a great one, ay! a greater
Perhaps for years you will not find!

You are standing, little Florence,
In the glory of the dawn,
And the bright world lies before you
With its beauties, night and morn;

And its beauties, never ceasing,
Morn by morn your eyes shall meet,
And its wonders, still increasing,
Year by year before your feet:

But the wonder that is filling
Your bright eyes with awe to-day
Is the great one, that this beauty,
And this wonder last for aye.

Ere upon this earth so lovely,
Little Florence saw the light,
Hope was high, and love was tender,
Joy was blythe—and stern the fight.

Cold, forgotten, 'neath the hillocks,
Cold—ah—colder! 'neath the sun,
Many lie, who, little Florence,
Had with joy their lives begun.

Do not tremble! 'tis the Eternal,
The Divine all-perfect plan,
That from age to age has governed
And shall rule us, man by man.

II

Did I know mamma? you ask me,
For to-day old friendships meet,
And familiar voices mingle
Drowned by little pattering feet,

And I see her, years long parted,
In her household, fair and mild,
And the little Florence by me
Is her youngest, loveliest, child.

I can see the old grey manor
And the fir trees on the lawn,
And the rustling, shimm'ring foliage,
And the summer light at dawn,

And the mossy garden terrace
'Neath the fruit-walls long and high,
Where the budding chestnut blossoms
Glittered white against the sky,

And the finely pencilled evenings
'Mid all which we passed our time,
I, a boy just granted freedom,
She, a maiden in her prime.

Life was young to us, and lovely,
Every door was opened then
To the stores of many ages,
To the thoughts and dreams of men.

And we gathered of the honey
Which flowed freely all around,
Walking with enchanted footsteps
On the poets' magic ground,

Dantë, Laura, Beatricë,
Arthur, Tristram, Elëanore,
And the shrine of Arthur Hallam
" In memoriam " evermore.

Thro' the world was I in fancy
With her wandering day by day,
Seeking for " the four-leaved shamrock "
Of the air she loved to play.

And the little lore I gathered
And the culture, as was meet,
Served to make our converse sweeter,
All was offered at her feet.

What she gave me back I say not,
What I owe her, who can say?
She, whose sweetness first exalted,
First refined life's opening day.

Still I hear her sisters' greeting,
Who for her sake held me dear,
And the household's kindly banter,
"Ah, we thought you two were near."

And I fancied sudden danger
And her guarded safe from harm
As we mounted at the gatehouse
With her light foot in my palm ;

As we loitered down the hedgerows
With a slack and careless rein,
With my hand upon her saddle
And hers resting on the mane ;

As we galloped o'er the park slopes,
Crossed the river at the ford,
Where the startled deer were herded
On the soft and flowery sward ;

As I mounted at the farm gate
'Neath the buildings mossy grey,
As I turned at the last winding
And looked backward on my way,

Through the winter trees I see her,
See her as I saw her then,
Vision of the past returning
Mid the haunts and strifes of men,

And all day time, in the summer,
In the meadows, 'mid the hay,
We two, never wishing other,
Lingered down the dying day,

Lingered down the mellowing sunset,
Lingered down the evening star
—And you ask me, little Florence,
Did I know mamma!

Ah! ah me! it shows how distant
Are those fairy summers now
That you ask me, looking upward
With your eager earnest brow,

And I answer, pretty Florence,
Answer, colder than the snow,
“Yes! I knew your mother, Florence,
Many, many years ago.”

III

Earth is fair! and, like old Memnon,
Full of melodies at morn!
But the fair earth grows still fairer
As day travels on from dawn.

And those melodies so tender
Though they reach us to the last,
Breathing murmurs, how bewitching!
From the harp-notes of the Past,

Yet they grow, their theme is higher
And their harmonies more sure.
And their discords are converted
Into chords serene and pure.

Lovely is the summer sunlight
Brilliant upon flower and grass,
Gracious are the cloudy shadows,
On the landscape, as they pass.

But the gifts of God are brighter
Than the sunshine on the grass,
And the bonds He ties more gracious
Than the shadows as they pass.

There are ties more fixed and tender,
Sealed and blessed in heaven above,
There is sweetness more enduring
Than a dreamy boy's first love.

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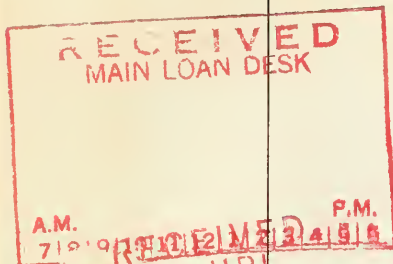
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